

Big quake in Japan kills two

TOKYO (AFP) — A major earthquake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale hit northern Japan on Wednesday killing at least two people and injuring scores. Roads were closed and trains stopped while several small tidal waves hit the coast, reports said. The two dead were in Hachinohe, in northeast of the main Honshu island, where the quake was most strongly felt. The floor of a pinball machine in the town, 500 kilometres north of Tokyo, collapsed, injuring eight people. Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) said. More than 85 other people were treated in city hospitals for cuts and burns. NHK said. A quake of 7.5 on the Richter scale can cause heavy, widespread damage, according to experts. Wednesday's tremor, which occurred at 9:19 p.m. (0119 GMT), registered six on the Japan scale of intensity ranging from one to seven. Six could damage many wooden structure houses, cause serious landslides and leave cracks in concrete, according to experts. The quake registered five in Morioka, Aomori and Mutsu.

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Battle for Grozny on

GROZNY (Agencies) — The Russian army launched a concerted attack on the Chechen capital Grozny from three directions on Wednesday after bloody bombing raids that destroyed an orphanage.

The Russians, using helicopter gunships, warplanes, tanks and Grad rockets, assaulted the Khankala suburbs in eastern Grozny and the strategic Karpinski hill in the west of the republic's capital just before dawn.

The storming of Grozny has begun. They want to take the city, but they won't, said Chechen government spokesman Movladi Udugov at the heavily guarded presidential building.

The attack was the first in the Grozny suburbs since President Boris Yeltsin sent troops on Dec. 11 to crush the republic's three-year independence drive.

A Russian division advanced three kilometres from the east and was fighting with Chechen forces around the former military airport in Khankala, about five kilometres east of central Grozny, said Shamil Besayev, commander at the Khankala front.

But the Chechen line was holding and the 10,000-man Russian force was unable to move, harassed by Chechens on all sides, he said.

"They won't come through tonight," he said as multiple Grad rockets roared over and crashed into nearby positions, sending up plumes of black smoke.

A member of Russia's influential security council said that Moscow's troops would gradually drive rebel fighters out of Grozny but denied the city would be stormed.

"Grozny will be freed from illegal armed forces, mercenaries and criminals. It will not be stormed, but it will be liberated," security council secretary Oleg Lobov told a news conference. "The liberation of Grozny will be carried out step by step, dis-

trict by district."

Mr. Lobov did not say whether troops would actually enter Grozny or use other means to drive forces loyal to Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Russian officials previously said the armed forces would blockade the city from the north, east and west while leaving roads to the south open.

Mr. Lobov said Russian troops had taken the key military airfield at Khankala; just six kilometres southwest of Grozny.

The Chechens, camouflaged in white against the snow, seemed in high spirits and operated in small groups of about 12.

All were armed with anti-tank rocket propelled grenades, which could cause havoc among the Russian armour if it advanced another kilometre into the streets of the suburb.

One group darting through deserted houses in the frontline shouted "Allahu Akbar" before disappearing.

Helicopters, the thunder of tanks and small arms could be heard continuously over the battle zone. The air stank with the smell of burning and explosions.

Two Chechen tanks and anti-aircraft guns mounted on armoured cars swung around from one end of the frontline to the other, highlighting the Chechens' lack of heavy weaponry.

"All the Russians use is snipers and tanks. We can only fight infantry," said 31-year-old Chechen soldier, Ruslan Abalelov.

Explosions of heavy guns and rockets could also be heard in the west of the city near Karpinski hill, which was still in Chechen hands, the government said. This could not be immediately confirmed.

The hill, about five kilometres from the centre, would give Russian gunners a

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REGENT VISITS WIHDAH: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday visits Al Wihdat for a first-hand review of the living conditions of the residents of the area (see page 3) (Petra photo)

Fahd, Assad and Mubarak meet upon Syria's behest

ALEXANDRIA (AFP) — Arab leaders on Wednesday held a mini-summit here amid pressure from Syria to close ranks and stop Israel exploiting divisions among Arab countries in the Middle East peace process.

Presidents Hafez Al Assad and Hosni Mubarak of Syria and Egypt met with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, said Egyptian Information Minister Safer Al Sberif.

The issues under discussion included the eventual return of Iraq to the Arab fold, four years after it was cold-shouldered for invading Kuwait in August 1990, a Syrian source said.

Damascus wants "an internal Arab reconciliation because maintaining the status quo with Iraq weakens the Arabs," a member of the Syrian delegation said, asking not to be named.

"That's why I wanted the summit to be held as soon as possible in Alexandria," he added.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid was also invited to take part in the summit, which has not been the case in previous talks between Arab leaders.

A European diplomat in Cairo said the mini-summit reflected Arab concern over Mr. Rabin's visit.

"The meeting looks like a rejection front. Mr. Rabin's visit to Oman has scared them," he said.

In Riyad, a Saudi official said Mr. Assad himself called for the meeting to complain that Arab countries were moving too fast towards normalisation with Israel.

"Syria is unhappy with the normalisation process between Israel and several Arab countries at a time when there is no progress in talks with Israel, whereas at the moment it is everyone for

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Royal Falcons pilot dies in crash

By Rana Husseini

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Bilal Abdul Hamid Shreideh, a pilot of the Royal Falcons, Jordan's national aerobatics team, died in a plane crash at Marka airport while practising on Wednesday.

A statement released by the Armed Forces to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the plane crashed at approximately 1 p.m.

According to an eyewitness, "the plane just dove to the ground."

"The manoeuvring needs a certain height to overshoot, but the (pilot) went below the height and could not recover and crashed," the eyewitness told the Jordan Times.

The eyewitness said the light-weight single-seat EXTRA-300 plane fell 50 metres from the civil defence units based at the airport and was engulfed by fire.

"It took less than five minutes to put out the fire, but Captain Shreideh was burned beyond recognition," the witness added.

Another eyewitness who was sitting in one of the offices at the airport at the time of the crash said that he heard a plane zooming in the area, and "all of a sudden I heard a loud explosion."

"When I went to check, I saw a ball of flames beside one of the airport hangars," the witness said.

The witness added that the only part that was left from the crash was the plane's vertical stabiliser, "and everything else was tangled together in one metal ball."

Airport sources said that the cause of the crash was under investigation and that a team will be formed to investigate the incident.

Experts describe the EXTRA-300 as a superb aircraft suited to the intricate manoeuvring demands of world-class aerobatics.

Capt. Shreideh served as an airforce pilot before joining the Royal Falcons.

Capt. Shreideh, who was 29, is survived by his wife and a new-born daughter.

It was the second reported disaster involving the Royal Falcons. On July 12, 1992, two Royal Falcons pilots were killed in a plane crash during an air show in Amman. The two pilots were Sherif Rakhan Ghazi and team mate pilot Mohammad Oudeh.

France probes whether hijackers had help

PARIS (Agencies) — French authorities on Wednesday began investigating whether Algerians who hijacked a plane in Algiers over Christmas had accomplices in France.

The Paris public prosecutor's office started legal action against "persons unknown" for complicity in the hijacking, justice sources said.

The four hijackers were killed when police stormed the Airbus 300 airliner in Marseille on Monday at the end of a 54-hour drama.

The opening of the legal file was entrusted to Investigating Magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguiere, who has handled France's major anti-terrorism cases for the past decade, the sources said.

The legal move was not

automatic and was taken because authorities had indications, which they did not divulge, that there may have been accomplices to the hijacking.

The hijackers killed three passengers — a Vietnamese diplomat, a French embassy cook and an Algerian policeman — in Algeria before taking the plane to Marseille.

Unconfirmed reports after the plane was stormed said police at one point suspected that the hijackers, members of Algeria's radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA), may have had accomplices among the plane's passengers.

No-one claimed responsibility for the hijacking but the Algerian government blamed fundamentalists, who accuse Paris of supporting the military-backed government

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hilitation and physical liquidation of Christian crusaders."

The group, which has emerged as one of Algeria's most bardline Muslim fundamentalist factions, said the priests were killed after four of its own "soldiers" died in the hijack.

The four were members of the same unit that killed the priests, it added.

The Airbus hijack marked the first time the civil war in Algeria, a former colony of France, had crossed over onto the French mainland, and Paris is concerned that it should not set a precedent.

French nationals, interests and institutions have for more than two years been targeted in Algeria by Muslim fundamentalist groups who accuse Paris of supporting the Algiers regime.

On Tuesday it was re-

ported that the plane was still suspended between France and Algeria, and Transport Minister Bernard Bosson was considering what extra security measures could be implemented before they were allowed to resume.

These could include allowing armed guards to be deployed on all flights to Algeria, as well as a ban on overnight stops by French planes in the country and tightened controls on airline staff, Mr. Bosson said.

On the French mainland as well, authorities, led by hard-line Interior Minister Pasqua, were considering what preventive measures could be taken to forestall any terrorist attack.

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(Continued on page 7)

Census shows 4.095m people live in Jordan

By Amy Henderson

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Preliminary results of Jordan's 1994 census show that 4,095,579 people are living in the Kingdom — 3,779,118 of them Jordanians, according to the Department of Statistics. The remaining 316,461 are foreigners in the Kingdom. However, they have not yet been categorised.

The preliminary results released by the department late Tuesday broke down the population by governorate and sex. According to the department, there are 1,917,601 male and 1,861,517 female Jordanians. Statistics also showed that family size has decreased since the last population census in 1979: Today's average Jordanian

members compared to 6.7 in 1979.

Officials also said that Jordan had seen a high population growth rate — 4.35 per cent — despite a drop in fertility rate, which they attribute to forced migration, particularly as a result of the Gulf crisis. Until now, it is estimated that 10 per cent of Jordan's population is comprised of returnees from the Gulf. Further census results should tell whether this is accurate.

These statistics were released Tuesday night via the Jordan News Agency, Petra, following the cancellation earlier in the day of a scheduled press conference at the Department of Statistics. According to a department official, the press conference was cancelled under the

nian, who is a Palestinian and what exactly constitutes a refugee has been taboo. The government has maintained throughout the years that less than 40 per cent of Jordan's population is of Palestinian origin, while most are inclined to believe that this figure may be unrepresentative of the actual number of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in Jordan.

Other theories have abounded as well concerning the census' purpose. Some have proposed that the census statistics would be useful in helping Jordan secure financial aid in further peace negotiations. One prominent Al Ra'i writer suggested that the results may be used in writing a new election law or redistricting the Kingdom for election purposes in a way he

equitable.

Government officials confirmed last week that the Ministry of Interior is, in fact, working on its own proposals to amend the election law. Others have contended that this figure may be unrepresentative of the actual number of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in Jordan.

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Hamas forms new fighting unit

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas has formed a new fighting unit to honour a suicide bomber who killed himself and wounded 12 others, mostly Israelis, in Jerusalem at the weekend. "We announce the formation of a new fighting unit ... it will shed Jewish blood," a Hamas speaker told a crowd of several thousand, who met here Wednesday to honour the death of the bomber Alim Radi Sunday. Four masked men claiming to be fugitives from Israel fired at least 100 shots in the air as the crowd cheered. A Hamas militant Sunday set off explosives next to a bus full of Israeli servicemen which he had tried and failed to board, the group said. The meeting Wednesday was held in a sports field next to an Israeli army base protecting the nearby Gush Katif Jewish settlement. Palestinian police observing at a distance did not interfere, but prevented youths running across to a fence around the army base. The Israeli army protested to the Palestinian police about the shooting, a Palestinian officer said. But he said the participants "are only trying to express themselves and are not harming anyone."

Israel continues settlement work despite protests

EL KHADER, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — Construction workers pressed on with a project to expand a settlement near Bethlehem on the occupied West Bank Wednesday despite Palestinian protests and a government review.

A government spokesman said Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had informed Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat that "the government would discuss the suspension" of work at Ephrat when it met Monday.

An announcement over Israel Radio that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had ordered the suspension of work resulted from a "confusion," the spokesman said.

The project could not be stopped immediately because it was privately financed and taking place on land which had been allocated to the settlement, the spokesman added.

Betaha Berdugo, adviser to Mr. Peres, said he told Mr. Arafat the bulldozers would stop building until the Israeli cabinet could reconsider the matter early next week.

Israel crews went on bulldozing the land for the settlement on a hill five kilometres south of Bethlehem Wednesday ahead of the construction of 500 new settler homes.

The Palestinians have warned the expansion of the settlement could wreck the negotiations on extending self-rule on the West Bank.

Some 300 Palestinians and leftwing Israeli demonstrators protested at the site Wednesday.

"We are not fighting against the Jews but against the Israeli government, which promises us peace on the one hand, but on the other presses on with settlements," said Naim Abu Suwai, aged 60.

"We'll stay here until they stop," vowed Mustapha Imran, 45, a supporter of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, who has slept rough next to the site for six

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Deal on self-rule council election is near — Arafat

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) are close to sealing an accord on elections to a Palestinian autonomy council but its size is still in dispute.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said in comments published Wednesday.

"Most of the issues connected with the election process have been settled. Only one point remains to be finalised: the number of council members," Mr. Arafat told the Egyptian weekly Al Masa'a.

"This will be tackled at my next meeting with (Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin," he said.

Last week Israel and the PLO agreed that further talks on an Israeli army redeployment away from urban centres on the West Bank would be held between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin.

Under the PLO-Israeli declaration of principles on autonomy signed in Washington in September 1993, Israel is to redeploy its troops ahead of Palestinian elections, which were originally set for July.

Negotiations in Cairo on extending Palestinian self-</p

U.S.: Iraqi regime behind people's suffering

WASHINGTON (USA) — Saddam Hussein is cynically manipulating the Iraqi people, systematically refusing to take advantage of the humanitarian options available under the United Nations sanctions, and blaming the U.N. for the people's suffering, a senior State Department official says.

Food and medicine are exempt from the U.N. sanctions regime, David Litt, director of the office of northern Gulf affairs pointed out. "There is no doubt the Iraqi people are suffering... But it is not due to the U.N."

Between January and August of this year, the U.N. Sanctions Committee approved the shipment of some \$2 billion worth of food and medical supplies to Iraq, Mr. Litt said. The committee, which is made up of Security Council members, is "very liberal" in approving humanitarian exports; food and medicine do not require U.N. approval at all, he noted.

The problem is not the Sanctions Committee, Mr. Litt stressed, but Saddam Hussein, "who has chosen to spend Iraq's money on such items as refurbishing palaces, crushing his internal opponents, and mobilizing troops to threaten the Kuwaiti border."

Apart from the humanitarian supplies which the Sanctions Committee oversees, Iraq has other options available to it, Mr. Litt said.

U.N. Security Council Resolutions 708 and 712 permit Iraq to sell up to \$1.6 billion worth of oil to purchase food, medicine and other humanitarian goods. Yet despite the option, "Iraq has chosen not to implement those resolutions," Mr. Litt said.

Yet, a third means of obtaining humanitarian relief is available to Iraq: through the U.N. agencies and international non-governmental organisations. For example, Mr. Litt said, the U.N. has set up a \$200-\$300 million programme to carry out humanitarian projects there. However, since Iraq restricts U.N. and NGO access within the country, international donors are unwilling to fund projects there because they cannot ensure their donations will reach their intended destinations or intended beneficiaries.

As it is, the U.N., NGOs, and bilateral donors can carry on their programmes in an unrestricted manner only in the northern three governorates of the country, out of Baghdad's control, he said.

At the same time, the government has imposed an embargo of food and humanitarian supplies on much of northern Iraq and the southern marshlands. His actions have been "particularly abhorrent" in those regions, Mr. Litt said. Human rights violations there "occur on a broad scale" and many incidents of murder, torture and disappearances have been "very credibly" documented by the U.N. special rapporteur on Iraq.

In the past few years, the army has destroyed about 90 per cent of the southern marshlands, a region where marsh Arabs have survived for thousands of years. Of the 250,000 people who lived in the region in 1990, fewer than 50,000 remain today. Iraqi forces have drained the marshes "on a massive scale," Mr. Litt said, destroyed the grasses and trees, and moved Iraqi armour and artillery units in afterward to attack villages suspected of harbouring opponents. No international monitors or relief workers have been allowed in the region for years, he added.

In northern Iraq, the U.N. special rapporteur has found evidence that the genocide convention may have been violated, many tens of thousands of Kurds have fled and many more have disappeared. Middle East Watch, the international human rights organisation, calculates the number of Kurds who have disappeared at 70,000-100,000, Mr. Litt said.

Iraq has now complied with one aspect of one of the U.N. resolutions, formally recognising Kuwait's borders and sovereignty. However, Mr. Litt said, the U.N. requires the country to account for all the Kuwaitis and third country nationals missing in action since the Gulf War, as well as return the property looted and stolen at that time. These resolutions, of course, come in addition to dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction — its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programmes — and preventing their regeneration.



PALESTINIAN PROTEST: An old Palestinian sits on the land where Israeli bulldozers are waiting to start working at the hillside south of Bethlehem, where villagers from El Khader and Israel Peace Now activists are trying to prevent Israeli settlers from starting constructions that will enlarge the Jewish settlement of Ephraim (see page one) (AFP photo)

Turkey bomb sale not decided — U.S.

WASHINGTON (Agencies)

— The U.S. State Department said Tuesday that it had not yet reached a decision on whether to license the proposed sale of cluster bombs to Turkey.

"No such decision has been made," David Johnson, a department spokesman, told reporters. He gave no indication when the matter might be decided.

Allian Techsystems, headquartered in Hopkins, Minnesota, signed a contract with the Turkish Defence Ministry on June 21 to supply 493 CBU-87 cluster bombs to Turkey, according to the Human Rights Watch arms project.

The project, in a report being released Wednesday and in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, said it was deeply concerned that Turkey would use such cluster bombs indiscriminately in its conflict with Kurdish rebels, with "devastating effects on the civilian population."

"We do not use weapons for anything but NATO purposes," he said.

The State Department "should under no circumstances approve this license request," said the letter to Mr. Christopher.

"We are deeply concerned

that Turkey will use these cluster bombs indiscriminately in its conflict with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), with devastating effects on the civilian population."

In its letter to Mr. Christopher, Human Rights Watch also urged tighter controls on future U.S. arms transfers to Turkey. It wants to see written guarantees that the arms would be used "only in NATO contingencies or with the prior approval of the U.S. government."

Turkish forces have long been fighting Kurdish guerrillas in the eastern part of the country. Human Rights Watch accused the Turks of attacking Kurdish villages.

Wamik Tan, first secretary at the Turkish embassy, called the organisation's statement an "absurd allegation"

put forward to poison relations between the United States and Turkey.

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"We are deeply concerned

Rabbani's truce offer still in air

KABUL (AFP) — Rival factions have still to reply to the unilateral Kabul ceasefire offered by forces loyal to Afghan President Bushanuddin Rabbani, an official spokesman said Wednesday.

"No clear and official agreement regarding a ceasefire has been received from the other side yet," said a Defence Ministry spokesman.

He said a special delegation had been assigned for talks with all the opposition factions to discuss the delicate question of the transfer of power from Mr. Rabbani to an interim governing body.

"We are now waiting to see what the United Nations is going to do," he said, as head of UNMAG, a mission for Afghanistan. Mahmoud Mestiri arrived in Pakistan to resume his peace efforts.

"It is time for them to cease looking from the sidelines and get into direct contact with the people of Kabul," he said.

A Foreign Ministry official said Mr. Mestiri, who reached Islamabad Tuesday, was expected to travel to Kabul.

He said Mr. Mestiri might meet opposition Hezbi Islami faction leader Gulbadin Hekmati in the case of provincial capital Jalalabad, before coming to Kabul to see Mr. Rabbani.

By constantly denouncing the presence of Afghan mujahideen alongside Chechen forces, the government here is exacerbating those searing memories, while the Muslim Chechens are clearly delighted to brandish the spectre.

"Afghanistan destroyed the Soviet Union. Chechnya will destroy the Russian federation!" instead Chechen Deputy President Zelimkhan Yandarbiev.

The forces actually fighting on the ground there are from the Interior Ministry at the moment, the regular army being much more reluctant. An exception is the air force, which has been killing dozens of civilians in bombing raids on the capital Grozny.

With all due respect to Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, another Afghan

veteran who is firmly among the hardliners on the Chechen issue, the Afghan nightmare still haunts the military.

No less a respected figure than General Boris Gromov has spoken out. He supervised the retreat from Afghanistan and was the last soldier to cross the border on February 15, 1989. Now, as deputy defence minister, he has complained about the "deceit" practised on the troops sent to Chechnya.

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"After a long series of defeats and humiliations, which began in Afghanistan, the Russian army has reached a point where it might quite simply refuse to obey orders," warned Pavel Felgenhauer, a respected military analyst with the liberal newspaper Sredniaia

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fatah attacks PFLP in Lebanon camp

SIDON (AFP) — Militants from Yasser Arafat's Fatah group attacked members of the rival Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) late Tuesday killing one person and wounding another, Palestinian sources reported. There was no immediate reason for the attack which occurred in the 'Ain Al Hilweh camp on the eastern outskirts of the southern part of Sidon in South Lebanon. But a key Arafat opponent in the camp, Musa Mayad, blamed "Israeli agents" for the attack. According to Palestinian sources, a group of Fatah militants hurled a rocket-propelled grenade and unleashed several rounds of gunfire at a PFLP office killing one of its occupants and wounding another. Earlier this month the PFLP and another Damascus-based group, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), announced a decision to merge their military leadership. Both groups are staunchly opposed to the Arab-Israeli peace process and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) self-rule accord with the Jewish state. Six people were killed and 13 others wounded in inter-Palestinian fighting last month in 'Ain Al Hilweh, the largest of 11 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. After the fighting Mr. Arafat appointed a new Fatah leadership in Lebanon aimed at preventing further bloodshed.

Ancient falcon cemetery found in Egypt

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian archaeologists have found hundreds of mummified falcons buried ritually at a cemetery in the eastern Nile delta in the first millennium B.C. Ali Hassan, director of excavations at the Supreme Antiquities Council, said the cemetery was at Tel Abu Yassin, about 20 kilometres from the town of Zagazig and an important burial place in the 4th and 5th centuries B.C. Cemeteries for mummified falcons are known from the western delta and near the southern town of Edfu, centre of the cult of the falcon god Horus, but the new one is an area better known for the worship of sacred bulls. Ancient Egyptian priests kept some of the animals associated with their god and gave them a ritual mummification when they died. Apart from those for falcons, Egypt has cemeteries for mummified bulls, cats, ibises, baboons and crocodiles. The government newspaper Al Abram said the falcon burials were of at least two types — in limestone sarcophagi by the rich, or loose on shelves by the middle classes and the poor. The rich also preserved falcon eggs in earthenware vessels placed close to the sarcophagi, it added.

Iraqis, Syrians arrested in furniture truck

WARSAW (AFP) — Seventeen Iraqi and Syrian nationals were arrested after they were found hidden in a truck travelling from the Belarus capital Minsk to Sweden, police said. The illegal immigrants were found Sunday at the Polish frontier post of Kukuryki, hidden behind furniture carried in the truck which police decided to search after observing that its load had been tampered with. The driver, of unspecified nationality, and his two Swedish assistants were arrested, and the illegal immigrants sent back to Belarus, police said. An official report by the Polish Labour Ministry Tuesday said between 100,000 and 150,000 immigrants, mostly from Russia, Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine, were working illegally in Poland.

Turkey asks Bonn to probe Iranian deaths

BONN (R) — Turkey formally asked Germany on Tuesday to investigate whether a massive fire that killed a Turkish national and his son was started by right-wing extremists. A Turkish embassy spokesman in Bonn said the mission had made the request in a diplomatic note to the Bonn government after the blaze, which police have described as accidental. "The German government is asked to investigate the case because in the past 64 per cent of arson cases were attributed to attackers who remained unknown," the spokesman told reporters. "The German government was also asked to prevent the recurrence of similar cases," he added. No comment was immediately available from the German Foreign Ministry. The spokesman gave no explanation of why Turkey suspected neo-Nazi violence that has killed at least 30 people since 1990.

Iran report cites malnutrition, overeating

IRAN (R) — Malnutrition and the growth of 15 per cent of Iranian children under five while 20 per cent of the population face health hazards because they eat too much, according to a report published on Tuesday. Iran's Centre for Agricultural Studies and Economic Planning said the country's per capita food consumption was in line with international standards but distribution was lopsided. "Twenty-five per cent of children under five suffer from slow growth and their bodies are smaller than normal for their age," the centre said in its report quoted in Khat Va Kargar newspaper. "Twenty per cent of the people do not have access to enough food according to the standards of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation. Forty per cent eat more than they need and the health of 20 per cent is seriously threatened because of overeating," it said.

Ambassador reported due on hijacked flight

PARIS (R) — France's ambassador to Algiers had been due to travel on the Air France flight to Paris which was hijacked, the French weekly Le Canard Enchaîné said. The weekly said Ambassador Bernad Kesselman was booked on Saturday's flight but decided to bring forward his trip by 48 hours. France had said two other embassy staff were on the flight. One of them, cook Yannick Benquet, was shot dead by the hijackers. The 54-hour hijack, which started at Algiers airport, ended on Monday when French commandos stormed the plane, killing the hijackers and saving the lives of the 169 remaining hostages.

Afghan nightmare still haunts Russians

style syndrome in Russian minds. A constant reminder is the sight of war veterans, disabled, their wounds, streets begging.

In the armed forces, the situation has gone from bad to worse. After their retreat from Afghanistan, the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 followed by the emancipation of the "fraternal" states of the Soviet bloc and then the breakup of the Soviet Union itself in 1991.

Next came the political crisis of late 1993, when the military hesitated a long time before siding with President Boris Yeltsin against rebellious members of parliament. The shock waves from all those catastrophes are still being felt.

The pullout from central and eastern Europe, completed this year, saw troops come back to Russia in degrading conditions, without decent lodgings available for them.

Accusations of corruption have been raining

down on superior officers, while the Defence Ministry has to fight inch by inch to ward off hefty cuts in its budget. The ministry wants 11,000 million rubles (\$32 billion) next year, but the 1995 draft budget is offering 4,500 billion rubles (\$13 billion).

In this context of extreme financial austerity, the Afghan precedent is arousing worries about the cost of the Chechenya military intervention.

Past experience of such operations showed that "they call for the spending of enormous sums, which Russia is incapable of bearing for long," warned Alexander Piskunov, deputy chairman of the duma's (lower house of parliament) defence committee.

Silence was the order of the day in all ranks during the decade of the Afghan involvement. It was only at the end of 1989 that the army paper Krasnaya Zvezda printed the results of an

inquiry showing that the military general staff had opposed the despatch of troops to Afghanistan. This time round, however, officers are resigning or even openly refusing to obey orders.

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"After a long series of defeats and humiliations, which began in Afghanistan, the Russian army has reached a point where it might quite simply refuse to obey orders," warned Pavel Felgenhauer, a respected military analyst with the liberal newspaper Sredniaia

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BRIEF

Lebanon camp

in Yarmouk, Arsal, Tafraoute, Popular Front for

Palestine, sources

say.

Yarmouk, for the

National South Lebanon

Front, Muammar Maqdisi

attack.

Arabs

Arabs</

U.S. envoy arrives in North Korea to seek pilot's release

SEOUL (R) — A senior U.S. diplomat crossed the world's last cold war frontier from South to North Korea Wednesday to try to win the release of a captured American helicopter pilot.

Thomas Huhard, deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, arrived in Pyongyang after crossing at the border hamlet of Panmunjom, North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said in a brief report.

It did not say whether Mr. Huhard would be allowed to see Chief Warrant Officer Bobbi Hall or who he would meet in Pyongyang.

A U.S. embassy official in Seoul said Mr. Huhard would seek to meet North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong-nam.

He said Mr. Huhard, who took part in negotiations with North Koreans in October aimed at ending the Communist state's suspected nuclear weapons programme, wanted to spend only a short time in North Korea "to secure the prompt and immediate release" of officer Hall, who is from Brooksville, Florida.

North Korea charged this week that Officer Hall had been on a spying mission when it shot down his helicopter on Dec. 17 and said the case needed further investigation under military law.

The United States has expressed regret at what it called an accidental intrusion it blames on a navigational error during a routine training mission. It says it is unclear if the helicopter was brought down or made an emergency landing.

On Tuesday North Korea released a photograph of a man it said was Officer Hall. It showed him in a flying suit with his hands in the air. It has said Officer Hall is in good health but has not been allowed contact with foreigners.

Seoul's Han Kyoreh Shin newspaper quoted an unidentified high-ranking North Korean official at the United Nations as saying Tuesday that Officer Hall's repatriation had been delayed because he was not cooperating with the investigation.

Officer Hall's crewmate, chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon, was killed in the crash. Pyongyang released his body on Thursday last week to U.S. congressman Bill Richardson.

KCNA warned this week that Washington must "admit its responsibility as the offender" and show a reasonable attitude "before it is too late."

U.S. officials said undue delay in freeing Officer Hall

"Obviously the North Koreans are squeezing us. They're putting us through water torture. But I think it's important to stay cool," he said.

Incoming Senate Majority leader Bob Dole has threatened to block the \$4 billion U.S.-North Korean nuclear deal if Officer Hall is not released, the Washington Times reported Wednesday.

Sen. Dole reportedly said he was not prepared to call for an outright rejection of the deal.

Under the accord, Pyongyang agreed to suspend its nuclear programme in exchange for a promise from Washington to supply some replacement fuel oil and organise a consortium to build light-water nuclear reactors worth \$4 billion, which produce much less bomb-making plutonium.

But Sen. Dole was quoted as saying Officer Hall's capture and the death of his co-pilot could be a reason to block "a lousy deal anyhow." He reportedly added: "You can't trust the North Koreans."

Officials of South Korea have expressed concern that North Korea is using its capture of the pilot to squeeze political concessions from Washington.

The North wants to replace the armistice which ended the 1950-53 Korean War by concluding a peace treaty with the United States — but excluding South Korea.

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conflict, the foreign affairs field could throw up strains between Mr. Zhelev and the new government.

He was in France on a state visit last month and is due in the United States in February at the invitation of President Bill Clinton.

A White House communiqué said that under Mr. Zhelev, Bulgaria had given up territorial claims in neighbouring countries, was applying UN sanctions against rump Yugoslavia, was developing relations with Turkey, Greece and Romania, and was one of the first signatories of the Partnership For Peace programme.

Mr. Zhelev, 59, founded the anti-communist UDF in 1989 within a month of the fall of the Communist regime. He has often taken the Socialists to task in recent years for undermining the restoration of farmland and blocking privatisation. He argues that only complete economic reform can lead to a genuine de-communisation of the country.

But Mr. Zhelev is expected to call on the Socialists to form a government within a week once a date is set for the new parliament to meet after the results are published in the official gazette Friday. Socialist chief Jean Videen, 35, an economist, has already

Zhelev becomes stabilising factor in Bulgaria

SOFIA (AFP) — President Zhelyo Zhelev, a one-time dissident with liberal ideas, is viewed as a factor of stability in Bulgaria, where there have been six governments since communism collapsed in 1989.

The ex-Communists have just won an absolute majority in the latest general election, with the Socialists calling themselves now, securing 125 seats in the 240-seat parliament in the Dec. 18 poll, according to final results published here Tuesday.

Their sworn foes, the Union of Democratic Forces which formed the outgoing government, got 69 seats.

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Armed
Norwegian
reaches
PoleA
day

Italian parties deadlocked over crisis

(Agencies) — The Italian political parties are deadlocked over how to resolve the crisis sparked by Mr. Berlusconi's resignation of Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Federalist Northern League called in talks with Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, a non-partisan government spokesman, to pass institutional reforms.

League, once a key ally and now his foe, forced the coalition to pull out of the five-party conservative alliance.

League, and the leftist Democratic Party Left (PDS), rejected Berlusconi's demands for general elections, saying it would be pointless existing rules.

Berlusconi and a few of his buddies want elections, League leader Umberto Bossi said.

suggested an economist joined to form the next government, whose main should be to introduce voting system, control of debts and implementation.

Gianfranco Fini, Mr. Berlusconi's most faithful backed the outgoing minister's demands for elections and said right National Alliance would oppose any plan to form a broad new one.

We confirmed our feeling it is indispensable to go to the polls and that government to carry Italy is the last one to have the confidence of parliament," Mr. Fini told reporters after meeting Mr. Scal-

for, the ultimate in Italy's political crisis holding a round of talks between national figures and of political parties in



Italy's Northern League leader Umberto Bossi arrives at his party's headquarters to meet with party dissident parliamentarians rejecting Mr. Bossi's plans of an alliance with the reformed communists of the Party of Democratic Socialism (AP Photo)

television campaign. His comments, in L'Espresso news magazine, were released ahead of publication.

Meanwhile, a poll published Wednesday showed a majority of Italians want Mr. Berlusconi to quit politics for good, and 15 per cent want him sent into exile.

Voters polled by telephone in the days immediately after Mr. Berlusconi was forced to resign last week showed at best feelings about the media magnate who came from nowhere to win March elections but resigned when his government fell apart last week.

According to the survey, taken by the Directa pollsters, 49.8 per cent of voters wanted the media magnate to

leave politics for good against 47 per cent who wanted him to continue.

Some 28.7 per cent of the 1,028 people polled said Mr. Berlusconi should have remained prime minister while 18.3 per cent said he should remain head of the Forza Italia party he founded earlier this year.

Some 34.7 per cent said Mr. Berlusconi should quit politics but be allowed to return to running his business activities. Another 15.1 per cent were fiercer in their condemnation of the former premier and said yes when asked if he should be made to join his friend, the disgraced former Premier Bettino Craxi, in exile in Tunisia.

Bangladesh government- opposition talks fail

porters of her Awami League, before leading her MPs to the tightly guarded parliament house.

There was no immediate comment from the government.

Opposition MPs from other groups slowly converged on parliament, but speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali had not arrived late Wednesday to accept their resignation letters.

Supporters cheered the legislators as they entered the parliament house, guarded by several hundred armed police and para-military troops, and a police officer said his men had "strict

orders" not to allow anybody, including journalists, into the building.

Last-minute attempts at a compromise over the opposition's demand for a constitutional amendment so future elections could be held under a neutral caretaker government failed.

Despite pressure on both sides from influential lobby groups to reach an agreement, the last-minute talks failed over differences about a joint declaration, the time when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would step down and the wording of a statement, sources said.

The opposition want the government to announce Mrs. Zia's resignation first.

A smiling Mrs. Wajed said after the announcement that she felt "relaxed" and "happy" for the people, though it is a one-point campaign to oust the government.

She said that under the legal framework proposed by the opposition Mr. Zia would resign and parliament would be dissolved ahead of fresh elections.

The president would appoint a serving or retired Supreme Court judges as an interim prime minister, who would not contest the polls, but would form a cabinet of non-partisan members.

Burundi president says crisis over as Christmas gift

Mr. Minani's election. The mainly Tutsi opposition UPRONA (Union for National Progress) party said its five coalition government ministers who had threatened to resign would attend the talks.

UPRONA President Charles Mukasi said they were responding to an invitation from Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko, a UPRONA member from Burundi's Tutsi minority, who broke with the party leadership's call and refused to quit the government.

Speaking in a debate on state-run television, Mr. Ntibantunganya said Mr. Minani was unacceptable, accusing him of inciting Hutus to kill Tutsis last year.

Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army is strictly enforcing a night curfew in Bujumbura,

imposed last week after some 30 people died in tit-for-tat ethnic killings fueled by the row.

Diplomats in the city said life had largely returned to normal but ethnic tensions still ran high in northern districts.

Trouble started when the mainly Hutu majority Burundi Front For Democracy (FRODEBU), which dominates the government, elected Mr. Minani as president of the National Assembly on Dec. 1.

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Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army is strictly enforcing a night curfew in Bujumbura,

India's Congress seeks 'human face' for reforms

ried by the continuing lack of nationwide consensus on the reforms, which were started by Mr. Rao after he took office in June 1991 and sought to bury four decades of closed-market policies.

The liberalisation returned to centre-stage after Mr. Rao's main rival in the Congress, Arjun Singh, quit the cabinet Saturday and lashed out at, among other things, the reforms.

Arjun Singh, in his resignation letter to Mr. Rao, said the opposition had managed to convince voters that "their cares, anxieties and concerns do not fall within the purview of the objectives to be achieved by the reforms."

He quickly added — and privately to U.S. Ambassador Frank Wisner — that he was not opposed to the liberalisation package, but only to its thrust, which Mr. Rao's critics say has given the Congress a "pro-rich" image. Even the country's economists are crossing swords

over the reforms.

"The recent verdict is most certainly not against reforms but against (the) government's failure to deliver goods and ensure a reasonable standard of living," said Ishar Ahluwalia of the Centre of Policy Research, a think-tank.

Usha Patnaik, an economist, disagreed.

"It was a vote against corruption and a vote against the new policies of the government," she said, blaming the withdrawal of subsidies on food items as the main reason for the sharp voter swing against the Congress.

The wide-ranging economic reforms have boosted exports and imports, and generated unprecedented business in stock markets. But they have also led to an all-round price rise, particularly of basic foodgrains.

"Thus income and wealth disparities have grown in the last four years," said economist Arun Kumar. "This growing income differential is

built into the new economic policy, and (affected the) polis."

The Congress, which faces a strong challenge in the February ballot, and the government are predictably worried.

Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee said Monday there was no question of the government changing tack on economic reforms, but said it will ensure they are implemented with a human face.

Congress leaders say the party will go for a vote-catching populist programme in the five states which go to the polls, which are being seen as the final rehearsal for parliamentary elections due in mid-1996.

The Statesman newspaper said New Delhi may drop plans to further reduce subsidies in the annual budget to be unveiled in February in a desperate bid to win back the support of the mass of poor and farmers.

U.N. commander Rose tries to defuse fighting in Bihać

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — The U.N. peacekeeping commander in Bosnia visited the enclave of Bihać Wednesday in a bid to halt fighting which threatens the country's latest ceasefire.

Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose flew to Bihać by helicopter from the Croatian port of Split, in his second attempt to enter the northwestern enclave after being blocked by Croatian Serbs surrounding the pocket earlier this month.

Bosnia's Muslim-led government has threatened to break the ceasefire if its troops continue to come under fire from Serb forces or their allies, rebel Muslim troops loyal to local businessman Fikret Abdic.

"General Rose is visiting Bihać pocket in order to assess the situation first hand, where there continues to be some fighting to the north between Serbs from Croatia and forces loyal to Fikret Abdic on one hand and Bosnian army troops on the other," said Thant Myint-U, a U.N. spokesman in Zagreb.

"He travelled there to see what can be done to make Mr. Abdic agree to a ceasefire."

Mr. Thant said the U.N. was making progress in talks on the proposed cessation of hostilities, under which peacekeeping troops would be deployed between the two armies.

U.N. officials expect the Serbs and the Muslim-led government to reach agreement on the four-month truce by or close to the planned deadline of Jan. 1, he said in Zagreb.

"We hope that we will have the cessation of hostilities agreement within the first

few days in January," Mr. Thant said.

Gen. Rose also planned to discuss securing regular supply deliveries for some 1,200 Bangladeshi U.N. troops who have been virtually cut off from the outside world due to a Serb blockade.

The U.N. wants to withdraw 400 peacekeepers from Bihać because of Serb obstruction of supply convoys held Croatan Serb authorities have blocked the withdrawal.

"The main focus is to secure regular supplies to our troops, rather than pulling them out," Mr. Thant said.

In the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, the ceasefire has been holding for the most part but a suspected Serb sniper wounded a 61-year-old woman in the leg Tuesday.

"We condemn in the strongest possible way this attack on a civilian," Mr. Thant said.

Meanwhile Croatian President Franjo Tudjman has made an unexpected foray into Croatian territory held by separatist Serbs and placed under U.N. protection since the middle of 1991.

Taking advantage of a Dec. 2 accord between Zagreb authorities and the self-proclaimed Serb Republic of Krajina on Dec. 2, Mr. Tudjman travelled Tuesday to the Slavonia region in eastern Croatia along portions of a highway — between Okucani and Nova Gradica — currently in rebel Serb hands.

The road was finally opened to civilian traffic on Dec. 21. Croatian Serb troops from the self-declared "Republic of Krajina" (RSK) to withdraw

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The closure of the Okucani-Nova Gradica segment of the highway, which used to link Zagreb with the Serbian capital Belgrade, had forced motorists heading for eastern Croatia to use secondary roads, adding 150 kilometres to the journey.

Speaking Tuesday in Slovenski Brod, halfway between Zagreb and Belgrade, Mr. Tudjman pledged that rail links between Slavonski Brod and Zagreb and between the Croatian capital and the Adriatic port of Split would also be restored.

The December agreement between Zagreb and the Croatian Serbs also calls for the establishment of communications as well as water and electricity services between the two entities.

"All the Croatian regions (under Serb control) will be liberated," Mr. Tudjman declared, but he added that his government backed "a political settlement" to the conflict.

He promised that the civil rights of Serbs living under Croatian rule would be respected.

But he warned that if Croatian Serbs "do not accept a peaceful settlement, it would be better if they left Croatia."

Mr. Tudjman reassured his readiness to normalise relations with the Serbian Republic in Belgrade "on condition that Serbia and Yugoslavia (now consisting of only Serbia and Montenegro) recognise the internationally accepted borders of Croatia."

The road was finally opened to civilian traffic on Dec. 21. Croatian Serb troops from the self-declared "Republic of Krajina" (RSK) to withdraw

Russian troops to mark sad New Year in Chechenya

ON THE CHECHEN BORDER, Russia (R) — Russian troops sent to quell separatist rebels in Chechenya are preparing to celebrate a sad New Year in the trenches, with little hope of a quick end to their unpopular military operation.

"We're just feeding flesh here, without even being told what we are here for and what is to come next," an Interior Ministry forces

sergeant said Wednesday as fellow-servicemen decorated a New Year tree, delivered by armoured personnel carrier.

His battalion, which has been dispatched to the rebel region with thousands of other troops, is waiting on the border between Chechenya and another Russian ethnic republic, Ingushetia, some 50-kilometres from the Chechen capital Grozny.

"This is a really sad New Year for me," the sergeant, who identified himself as Alexander, told Reuters.

The battalion's commander, Vladimir Ivanovich, said he was trying to ensure his men had at least a few of the simple joys of the New Year holiday, the Russian alternative western Christmas festivities.

"Come and spend New

Year's Eve with us," he said, standing in an open field covered with trenches and dug-in armoured vehicles. "We will have a real New Year tree and champagne."

Soldiers all around were busy decorating fir trees delivered from the nearby forest. One tree, near a tank, was topped with a festive five-point star. This had been hewn out of a used cartridge box with an axe.

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Jordan Times

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Blame it on others?

THE EGYPTIAN president, Hosni Mubarak, was quoted yesterday as telling a Kuwaiti newspaper that Jordan "reneged" on an agreement it had with Syria to "sign peace with Israel at the same time." The Egyptian leader said that Jordan's peace with Israel "stirred Syrian reservations."

The charges made by Mr. Mubarak are serious since Syria itself has so far said nothing to this effect. Nor was any such agreement reported by any source.

Jordan has always sought and is still seeking a comprehensive peace because the Kingdom believes that for peace to hold and last it has to be concluded between Israel and all the Arab parties concerned.

Right from the beginning of the Madrid peace process in October 1991, Jordan sought in vain to ensure a minimum level of Arab coordination in order to ensure a better deal for the Arab side. That effort has failed, though, through no fault of the Jordanian side. While Jordan chose to play in tandem with the other parties it at times found itself left behind, especially with the Oslo breakthrough on the Palestinian track.

Not only that. Jordan was pressed by both its Arab brothers and the West. And Jordan pleaded with its Arab brethren, especially Egypt and Syria, to work for the lifting of the blockade against us by their friends in the Arab World and elsewhere. Furthermore Jordan wanted to see, and at a certain stage sensed, real progress on the Syrian-Lebanese track with Israel. We find it therefore odd to hear these remarks at this time when Jordan is seeking to mend Arab differences and bring Arabs back together.

What in fact makes the position of each individual Arab state so vulnerable is the fact that the Arabs are divided. And unless a genuine effort is made to end this division and regain a minimum Arab consensus on national issues, the Arabs will continue to be weak. Perhaps the meeting between President Mubarak, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and President Hafez Al Assad of Syria in Alexandria would lead to a fresh initiative to mend fences in the Arab World by pressing the need to hold an Arab summit.

Egypt, traditionally the leader of the Arab World, could play a positive role in this effort. The psychological effects of the Gulf war and peace treaties with Israel can only be mitigated by a genuine drive at reconciliation. Only a united nation can have a better deal on both the regional and international levels.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE COMING year is expected to witness confrontation between Iran and the United States, claimed a writer in *Al Dastour* Wednesday. Mohammad Kawash said that Washington was expected in the new year to open two fronts against Tehran: one internal and the other external. He said that on the domestic front Washington was expected to set one group against the other in order to weaken the regime which Washington is accusing of siding with the Islamist revolutionaries in different parts of the world. The writer said that on the external front Washington was expected to drum up the question of Iran's occupation of the three islands that belong to the United Arab Emirates. According to the writer, the United States is worried about the oil-rich Gulf area and concerned over Iran's current moves to spread its domination and influence in that strategic area, bearing in mind the recent Shiite-backed disturbances that erupted in Bahrain. The writer said that there is no doubt that the coming year would witness confrontation which he said will be for the sole purpose of serving the interests of the United States and Israel alone within a plan designed to create a new Middle Eastern order.

A COLUMNIST in *Al Ra'i* Wednesday discussed the current contacts to form a new government capable of dealing with the rapid developments at the domestic and regional levels. We hope that the prime minister will this time be more fortunate and wiser in selecting the team that would help him carry on the task ahead, said Sultan Al Hattab. The writer said it seems that the prime minister this time is not in a hurry to put together a cabinet and he is taking time to think over every single move. Perhaps the prime minister is contemplating involving parliamentary blocs in his coming government in a bid to reduce the opposition effect on the one hand and to ensure smooth and rapid passage of draft laws that are required to cater to the requirements of the coming era, said the writer. He said that Jordan is in need of a government reflecting all shades of the political spectrum in the country and truly reflecting the political pluralism which the Kingdom has embraced with the advent of democracy. The writer said he hoped the prime minister would this time select a group of persons who truly believe in national unity.

The View from Academia

For whom the bell tolls: teachers and the school day

THE RECENT decree by the Ministry of Education requesting teachers to stay at school till the end of the school day triggers in my mind a few thoughts regarding the decree itself and regarding the teacher's role in school life as a whole.

The decision (which, by the way, is not new; what is new is its enforcement) requests teachers to be present at the premises from the time "the first bell rings" (around 7:45 a.m.) till the time "the last bell rings" (on some days, when there is a sixth class only, at approximately 1:10 p.m., and on other days, when there is a seventh class, at around 2:00).

Formerly, teachers showed up 7:45 a.m., with some exceptions here and there. The exceptions included, primarily, those teachers who did not have a first or second lesson, those who had pressing reasons for not showing up on time (sickness, urgent tasks and missions of sorts, unavoidable delays, etc.), and those who made "special" arrangements with schoolmasters. As for the time of leaving school, it varied somewhat. When teachers had a sixth or seventh class, they left at 1:10 p.m. or 2:00 p.m., respectively. On those days when they finished earlier—say at the end of the third, fourth or fifth lesson—they were technically free to leave. Most, however, did not leave except at the end of the fifth lesson, around 12:30; this was almost a binding rule for the vast majority of teachers. Again, there were some exceptions here: those who had legitimate and pressing reasons of sorts and those who made "special" arrangements with schoolmasters.

This has basically been the picture up until the recent decree. I have spoken with several teachers about the decree, with the aim of assessing their viewpoints, and I have found out that they all object to it. Naturally, some of the reasons they give are plausible, common-sensical, perceptive and persuasive. Others are not. On the whole, however, I believe that they have a case.

The following points need to be taken into account when thinking about the wisdom and value of the decision:

1. The time factor. Some people are under the impression (a false impression no doubt) that a minute a teacher finishes his/her last lesson, he/she can leave any time they wish. This is not true, for as I have just mentioned, teachers do not leave (except when they obtain a permission) before the end of the fifth lesson. This is one thing. Another important thing to keep in mind here is that the amount of time in question (which the decree is attempting to have a grip on) ranges merely from one to one and a half hours

(from the end of the fifth period to that of the sixth or seventh), and not a whole working day—as some may think. Let's keep that in mind.

2. The rationale behind the decision. It is not clear in the minds of teachers (and the minds of observers interested in the welfare of education in the Kingdom) why the ministry has opted for enforcing the decision at this particular moment in history. As in the case of many decisions of this sort, the teachers have not been consulted. Are not they fundamental participants in the educational process? Forget that. This is perhaps too democratic for us yet. But ought not they be informed or enlightened in minute detail about the virtues of the decision? This has not happened. I have asked many teachers about the exact wording of the decree and about the reasons cited by the ministry for the enforcement. They do not know. They ought to know, of course; they ought to find out. Admittedly, this is a mistake on their part. But ought not the ministry to go out of its way to explain and justify that is, if their are explanations and justifications at the first place. Are there? "In the general interest of the school," "in the general interest of education and the homeland" and some other such statements are too vague to make sense. One wants specific reasons.

In the absence of coherently formulated, eloquent and effectively phrased justifications, one is left free to conjecture and guess. If the reason behind the decision is to have control over and prevent the frequent violations of the working day (I have heard something to this effect), such control and such prevention are better served through other means. It is a bad idea (and this is a phenomenon quite widespread at our public institutions) to attempt to deal with widespread exceptional cases and minor violations through a general decision or regulation involving everybody. In my opinion, this is a form of what may best be called "administrative impotence." If a schoolmaster allows his "buddies" to leave earlier than others, and if a teacher makes too many excuses and gives too many pretenses for coming to school late and leaving early, such headmaster and such teacher are to be questioned and firmly asked to change their behavior. We should not be coy, afraid or "kind" and "generous" in dealing with violators and rule breakers.

If the reason is to equate teachers with other public servants and employees who work from 8:00-2:00 (and I have heard something to this effect also), the analogy does not apply. For one thing, teachers come to school at no later than 7:45, some come earlier. Some in fact give free extra lessons to students at 7:00. For another, when a

public employee leaves the premises at two, he/she is free; the work remains behind. The teacher, on the other hand, takes his work with him, copybooks to fill out, exam to grade, essays to read, etc.

But if the rationale behind the decision is to inject life into schools, many of which are virtually dead (students and teachers come to classes then leave), this is an entirely different matter.

Yes, our schools need life, need activities of all sorts need public lectures and seminars for both teachers and students, need real interaction within their yards and halls. Aside from formal lessons, there is hardly anything else for most of the activities are at best symbolic and marginal. It is a fact that students and teachers at the more privileged schools and educational establishments (in our society as elsewhere in the world) learn, grow and develop (at all levels) at these schools and establishments. The sad thing is that the vast majority of our schools and universities (nor "institutions" in the positive sense), rather, they are primarily buildings, seats and textbooks. Not much else there. "School life"? "Campus life"? Where is it? We all want to see it materialize; we all pray for it to come true.

How can it be created? Definitely not by asking teachers to stay at school till the "last bell rings," a "bell" whose reductive Pavlovian and Skinnerian implications and connotations we all know. If we want to have teachers spend ample time at schools (and not just an additional one or one and a half hours), we should think about what we want to have them do. One headmaster told me, and he was not joking: "If I keep all teachers at school, the quarrels and fights among them will at least triple." Under the present system of teaching (we call it "education"), which is composed of nothing but classes and classes and more classes, there is no time for activities; even if the teachers stay at the premises and want to engage students in activities, no students will be available, for all of them have classes to attend.

We want the ministry to toll the bell, and we want the teachers to obey. But what bell? It is the bell which heralds a new change, a restructuring of the school day, a fundamental reorganization of the business we conduct at schools and the way we conduct it. We want a school day which conveniently and effectively allows students and teachers to interact, to engage in fruitful and meaningful activities inside and outside the classroom, and to embark on the road of real education. And we want decrees and decisions which really work, rather than those which look good on paper.

LETTERS

Helping foreigners study in Jordan

To the Editor:

THE ARTICLE "Students who need help are many, but help them?" by English language and literature Professor Al Majdoub (Dec. 13-16, Jordan Times) is written with the Jordanian student in mind. However, the title of this reminded me of the one he wrote for the June 3-6 issue *Jordan Times*: "Foreign nationals an asset in language teaching" for me is that foreign nationals can be used to teach Jordanian students with, at the very least, their English no one denies that nowadays good English skills are crucial graduates who seek well paying jobs).

In the earlier article, Dr. Majdoub emphasized 1) importance of helping foreign nationals to teach English as a second language, 2) that foreign nationals are a potential in Jordanian schools (permanent residents in particular), 3) the fact that students are usually more motivated to learn a language from a native speaker.

Because native speakers of language may not necessarily have the required degree to teach, a question I would like to bring this letter concerns who will assist that same foreign national obtain his/her degree at a Jordanian university?

To truly be an asset to Jordan's school system, native speakers of languages (particularly those of us who are living permanently in Jordan) need to know that we have opportunities to help us receive an education and training in Jordan, if not the Jordanian "establishment" must provide foreign nationals with incentives. In the long run, this will be the benefit of Jordanian students.

We foreigners take seriously how far a good education will make us more effective employees. Many of us have pioneered in Jordan for years (in my case, nearly 16 years), know the meaning of struggle. And we deeply appreciate a opportunity to help us increase our knowledge and intellect, help others increase theirs, and to provide for our families and through the means of rewarding careers.

I know that I am not the only foreign national who moved to Jordan without a university degree. How wonderful it would be to have an opportunity in our home country to change that!

The education administration in Jordan could finance education of permanent native English (or other) speakers studying education, English as a second language literature etc. for those who agree to repay this opportunity upon graduation, let's say, teaching English for four years in one or Jordanian schools.

Companies could make scholarships, loans and grade awards available to foreign nationals who are permanent citizens of Jordan and had good/excellent high school grades (I graduated in the upper 25% of my senior class, for example). Financial aid could be repaid by the graduate, especially in needed by agreeing to work for the company for four years at a rate salary, if need be, or some other incentive.

Universities and English departments could set up financing. Each student wishing to be a member would be asked to contribute a one-time ID. 50 fee (for example). An awards committee would be in charge of distributing the money students according to need. If an English department had sufficient funds available to all English students the native English-speaking student would then have an equal opportunity to ask for financial assistance.

With such incentives, universities in Jordan would attract foreign national teachers who can teach.

But some university subjects are only taught in Arabic, which is an obstacle to obtaining a degree for many foreign nationals. Passing an Arabic language exam, sooner or later, is essential being awarded a degree at most of Jordan's colleges and universities. This is another hurdle for the foreign national student.

Some specialized colleges only teach in the Arabic language. An English-speaking foreign national is interested in attending a two-year college of library science, for example, the best impossible without fluency in Arabic.

More allowances and provisions should be made for foreign nationals who are permanent residents in Jordan. The American University Graduates (AUG) not long ago organized a trip to Jordan. If something on this scale is made possible by Arab-Americans, surely someone can organize a group called "American Attending University in Jordan" (AAUJ). Until someone does that, out of frustration I will organize a group of one called the American Wishing to Attend University in Jordan (AWAUJ).

Mrs. Les Marie Rash Zeitou
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferable address as well. Name can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Hijack casts shadow over Franco-Algerian ties

By Bernard Edinger

Reuter

PARIS — France's deep ties with Algeria have been strained by a row over the handling of the Air France hijack and French fears of being sucked into Algeria's ferocious civil conflict.

"The new Algerian war has exploded onto the French scene," said Benjamin Stora, a leading French historian of the troubled, often bloody, decades between two countries set face to face across the Mediterranean Sea.

French politicians are going to have to make some hard choices about future ties with Algeria because the problem is not going to go away," Mr. Stora told Reuters on Tuesday.

He echoed officials who warned that French commandos' successful storming of the plane hijacked in Algeria by fundamentalist gunmen was unlikely to end attacks by such determined groups as the radical armed Islamic group (GIA).

The 54-hour hijacking, which ended in Marseille with the killing of all four GIA guerrillas, would not necessarily be interpreted as a final defeat by the group's leaders, who have rarely enjoyed such interna-

tional attention in the past. "It's only a temporary setback for the kind of terrorist act that feeds on publicity," said Mr. Stora.

Less than 24 hours after the end of the hijack drama, three French and one Belgian priest were murdered in northern Algeria.

Commentators said past waves of hijackings in the Middle East showed there were always endless reservoirs of desperate fanaticized youths ready to become martyrs for a cause.

The GIA and the companion Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) want to overthrow Algeria's non-elected military government and place the country under Sharia law.

They say France gives Algeria military backing and they have killed 22 French nationals so far in Algeria itself.

France is horrified at the idea of an Islamic regime an hour's flight away across the Mediterranean but relations with Algeria's current rulers are not easy either.

France rejected the use of French police on its soil, and the French feared that Algerian special forces, who expect no quarter from the fundamentalists and offer them none, would cause a massacre if they stormed the plane in Algiers.

Up to 20,000 people may have died in Algeria since strife began in 1992 with the cancellation of elections which the FIS was poised to win.

French officials were at pains after the hijacking to distance themselves from the Algerian government. "France's economic aid is to the Algerian people, not for one side or another," said Foreign Minister Alain Juppe.

M. Juppe said Paris wanted democracy in Algeria and recalled Paris had long pressed military authorities to seek dialogue with moderate forces in the country.

Mr. Stora said it was wrong to believe there was nothing to do on the political spectrum between the military and the Muslim extremists. Mistrust is rampant on

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SOCIETY ON THE MOVE

King unveils Dragon secret: story of missile going awry

His Majesty King Hussein, who Tuesday left for Austria to have a check up on his ears, revealed during this week's working luncheon which he hosted for journalists and columnists at Basman Palace that he had long ago suffered some damage to his left ear while test firing an anti-tank Dragon missile which the Armed Forces had just acquired. "The soldier who was firing the missile missed twice, so I took it upon myself to try," the King told the attentive group of journalists. The exercise ruptured the eardrum because unfortunately the King had not taken the right precautions while firing. His Majesty confided in the journalists that he too missed, which probably upset him more than the injury to his ear. "The question of why we were missing the target plagued us all until we discovered the reason," the King said. "As it turned out we should not have been shooting in an area full of sand."

* * * * *

DOCTORS' ORDERS ARE NOT ALWAYS FOLLOWED: Sources close to the King disclosed that the damage to his ear could have been contained had His Majesty followed doctors' instructions. "But the man does not rest, or he can have no rest when the doctors tell him he needs it," one source said. "Doctors' orders are not easily followed by kings, and certainly not this King," the source said. "Often after His Majesty was treated for the ear infection, something would happen forcing him to travel when he should not," added the source. The last time this happened was in April, when Her Majesty the Queen Mother passed away hardly a few days after the King had an operation on his ear in London and was advised not to fly for a period of time afterwards. But this was one of life's tolls.

* * * * *

SOUND JUDGEMENT DESPITE EAR BLUES: Whatever the damage to his ear, the King could not but take keen note of what he reads, sees and bears, in the press as well as in the broadcast media. At the luncheon, among other topics, King Hussein again, as he has done in past, called on the local television media to exercise sound judgement in news worthiness and trim down coverage of his own activities as well as those of the Royal Family. "We are part of the whole Jordanian family," he said. "Whatever activities we undertake are part of our duties. So there is no need to have them on television all the time." At the same time, the King directed that Jordan Television and Radio Corporation make a serious reassessment of the programmes it offers with an eye towards a conscious overhaul of what it puts on the air. Although the corporation had earlier reported that alterations in programming were in the offing, the order by the King was interpreted by some as a message to "fast-forward" that process. With such an overhaul, viewers and listeners might one day participate in a media rating system to help producers decide just what it is the public is really interested in.

* * * * *

DECade-old CRYSTAL BALL: Since the start of the democratisation process in 1989, columnists had few qualms about letting people know what they think and their wrongs could resurface and provide insight into the development of their earlier views and convictions. Some veteran J.T. readers may recall that years ago, in the mid-eighties to be precise, Marwan Muasher, Jordan's ambassador-designate to Israel, doubled as

a J.T. columnist and university professor. With his imminent posting in mind, we searched our files at the paper and found a piece penned by Dr. Muasher which addressed what he then saw as a need for "a better understanding of Israel." Following are highlights from the piece, which was written following a political squabble between Israel's then Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Trade Minister Ariel Sharon under the National Unity Government that began in 1984. The piece, which was by the way inexplicably never published in the J.T., highlights how our colleague and friend from Salt may have had an instinct that he would one day do exactly what he preached: "A political feud between Prime Minister Peres and Trade Minister Sharon seriously threatened the governing coalition, and almost brought about the downfall of the National Unity Government. What I find of interest here is the treatment by our society of such events whenever they occur in Israeli society. We have a tendency to dismiss any Israeli social or political moves as 'staged plays.' This (negative) image of both the Israeli individual and society is most understandable in our culture. In an era where the Arab, and more particularly the Palestinian, individual has been constantly subjected to Israeli injustice and arrogance, it is difficult to draw any human image of anything related to the word Israeli. This fact, coupled with the physical isolation between Arab and Israeli societies over a considerable number of years, has led to an almost total ignorance of the Israeli mind and way of thinking. The idea we hold of Israelis is one we have largely formulated out of myth, regardless of what Israelis are truly like. If we are to think of counter ways of dealing with Israel effectively, we have to acquire a thorough understanding of the Israeli mind. We have to deal with this fact called Israel, and stop acting like we are dealing with a vacuum. That this has not so far happened has already caused us much harm. As the situation stands it is almost impossible to find any literature about Israel other than pure propaganda. There are no research centres where one could obtain information about the people who live across the river, and the ones responsible for one of our biggest problems. I suggest the formation of a research centre for Israeli studies, where information can be collected on all walks of Israeli life. Information and expertise from such a centre could be utilised on the highest levels in taking sounder decisions pertaining to our regional problems." Dr. Muasher's words of nearly a decade ago leaves one wondering if he was not looking into a crystal ball back then, and more importantly perhaps, about how he would be utilising his tour of duty in Israel to do exactly what he himself had called for.

* * * * *

EXPLETIVES DELETED: This same belief in the need for accurate information that the ambassador-designate was advocating was the topic of a recent war of written words between Al Ra'i's Arabic daily columnist Samir Hiyari and Director of Maan Government Hospital Tayseer Kheishan. Hiyari had blasted what he described as abominable conditions at the Maan Hospital in one of his columns, thus eliciting a scathing reply to the editor by Dr. Kheishan. The reply was reprinted in the space allotted to Hiyari's column with an editor's note saying that "some dirty words that neither Al Ra'i nor its readers would tolerate" were omitted. Dr. Kheishan's reply did little to counter Hiyari's allegations, but rather occupied significant space highlighting the visits and donations of members of the Royal Family, ministers and other prominent officials to the hospital. In the end, it was a matter of Hiyari's words against Dr. Kheishan's (expletives or no expletives) and vice-versa. Maybe this controversy will result in the formation of independent teams that would conduct unannounced check-ups on

the country's health and other public service facilities to ensure that requirements and standards are being met and maintained.

* * * * *

CHECK THE 'EYEWITNESS': Another Al Ra'i reader, Ali Al Halabi, the honorary consul of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, took offense at a report in the newspaper and quickly wrote its editor in defence of the West African country he represents. Mr. Halabi said that the Al Ra'i reporter quoted an "eyewitness" as saying that more than 14,000 Mauritanians, eager to escape the poverty of their country, had applied for 500 jobs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "What I want the eyewitness to know," wrote the consul, is that these Mauritanian citizens are leaving their own country to take up honourable work in another to improve their living conditions, and not to escape poverty. He said it was the responsibility of the chief editor to verify the words of such eyewitnesses, and that the "alleged" eyewitnesses themselves should witness Mauritania's advances in democracy, political pluralism, freedom of the press and the establishment of constitutional institutions. Maybe Al Ra'i should send a team of investigators to Mauritania right away.

* * * * *

JORDANIAN HITS BUNDESTAG?: The desire to emigrate resulted in a significant success story as was illustrated in a recent familial advertisement in Al Ra'i. The advertisement read: "Haj Ramadan Hammad and sons, Talal, Jamal, Jalal, and Dr. Kamal from Kufra Aanech, congratulate their cousins Ali Hammad, Yousef Hammad, and Dr. Aref Hammad on the occasion of their brother Dr. Hisham Hammad's election to the German parliament — the first time in the history of the German parliament that an immigrant has won a seat." Although we do not know whether the seat won by Dr. Hammad was indeed in the Bundestag (the advertisement did not say); if so he may stand a chance to be seated next to Dagmar Koehl, Miss Germany of 1977, who secured a parliamentary seat in the October elections for the Christian Social Union.

* * * * *

CHANGE AT VOA: History will witness movement of another sort soon when Voice of America's (VOA) Programme Centre Director Mohammad Ghuneim concludes more than a decade of duty in Jordan. Ghuneim, who said that he very much enjoyed his rather long assignment here, leaves for Washington, D.C. to become chief of the Arabic branch of the VOA. He and his wife Ida, will reunite with their four adult children who are already pursuing careers or completing their higher education in the U.S.

* * * * *

OF MOVES AND MUSICAL CHAIRS: People move, but so do government offices. Keeping track of the "musical chairs" of public facilities, the Amman Governorate moved from Jabal Hussein to the former premises of the Interior Ministry at the Jamal Abdul Nasser Circle. Next week, the Criminal Court is expected to be moved to the same new premises of the governorate. As was reported earlier, the Interior Ministry moved to new premises behind the Royal Cultural Centre, and the General Intelligence moved into a huge new complex located southwest of the King Hussein Medical Centre. But while Interior Minister Salameh Hammad brims with pride over having his new domain completed in record time, citizens have been overheard complaining that it was easier to just walk into the old offices



Mohammad Ghuneim

back at "Dawar Dakhiliyah" and actually get to speak to an official. And at the landmark "mukhabarat" blue giant, the colourful Badia police have settled into their new head camp. Back on the job in the government sector in a not-so-new but still rather impressive building, after recovering from a car accident last week, is Minister of Agriculture Mansour Ben Tarif. Dairy producers and poultry farmers must have shown Mr. Ben Tarif and his ministry some extra consideration during a week that was marked by threats of strikes and conflicts over animal feed supplies. Still analysts say Mr. Ben Tarif will have time to rest because Karak Deputy Samir Habashneb is tipped for the minister's seat in the next Cabinet.

* * * * *

ANOTHER FIRST: Consideration was in the cards also for prominent lawyer Jamal Nasir who was decorated by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands while she was on a state visit to Jordan this month. Dr. Nasir, who is the King's attorney in London and legal advisor to and member of the board of Royal Jordanian, the national air carrier, was awarded the Commander in de Orde van Oranje-Nassau for his contribution and work in the field of aviation. We are told that this is the first time such a medal has been awarded to an Arab on legal merit in aviation affairs. Dr. Nasir's legal portfolio includes working to resolve the controversy over allegations of discrepancies in R.J. purchases of Airbus aircraft.

* * * * *

A GRATEFUL TOURIST: Commendations were in order also for doctors at the Petra Polyclinic in Wadi Mousa who cared for British tourist Mrs. C.A. Ohl when she suffered a severe asthma attack while visiting Petra. In a letter addressed to our embassy in London, Mrs. Ohl said that "by chance, the wife of the Minister of Tourism was visiting Petra at the same time and her kindness and prompt action in getting me to the clinic were much appreciated." Mrs. Ohl said she hopes to return to Jordan, "a country and a people to be proud of."

On that happy note, we wish our readers a safe, healthy and peaceful new year.

Jennifer Hamarneh

Pervasive censorship

Guardians Of Thought: Limits On Freedom Of Expression In Iran

Middle East Watch, New York and Washington 1993

Iran is a land of paradoxes. It must be admitted by any objective observer that in some respects public debate is certainly freer there than in most other countries of the Middle East. There is a diversity of opinions allowed, in the press as within the Majlis, in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Yet a closer look reveals that censorship is pervasive in Iran, in spite of ongoing lively debates, and the survival of a large book publishing sector which actually flourished until two years ago, when the harsh economics of an industry dependent on imported paper and artificial currency rates caught up with it.

Broadcasts on Iran's state TV — obviously a key medium — are heavily controlled, tending to be grey and deadly dull, often gloomy in spirit. Indeed, one of the most persuasive explanations advanced for the healthy state of book publishing and book sales in Iran since the 1979 revolution is that TV was so boring that many educated people switched off and read books instead.

Probably the worst aspect of contemporary Iran is the sheer uncertainty about what is permitted for a writer or publisher. The constitution and laws count for nothing when their actual implementation is in the hands of powerful, wilful despots. "It is never clear whether what can be said, written and filmed today will be cause for financial ruin, arrest or other punishment tomorrow," claims this report by Middle East Watch.

Application of the Press Law, which looks good on paper, remains highly uncertain in Iran. "Laws are applied selectively and inconsistently, and there is uncertainty as to the governing norms." Even worse, vigilante groups acting for factions within the govern-

ment often resort to violence or bombings in "protest actions" to intimidate and effectively censor their opponents.

In the academic field, purges of teaching staff and highly ideological criteria adopted for students' access to universities — especially for young women — have done much to erode and lower educational standards.

Laughter can be a weapon of the poor or powerless, and political jokes, as George Orwell once said, amount to "tiny revolutions." Certainly, all the evidence given here suggests that Iran's clerical government not only lacks a sense of humour, but a proper sense of proportion too. The regime has punished severely those daring to use laughter to a political purpose. Naturally, cartoonists and writers utilising satire have suffered when they seem to show disrespect for the cherished icons of Iran's regime. More than anything else, it is the image of Ayatollah Khomeini when used in a humourous context — even blurred in outline and frankly ambiguous, as when appearing in the folds of a dress-pattern in a women's magazine — which has roused the mullahs' blind fury.

Among the most sinister of the various tactics used to silence writers and artists in Iran are shrill campaigns of defamation. Some of Iran's most talented film makers have been intimidated in this way. In a daring open letter, film maker Mohsen Makhmalbaf denounced the regime's brutal "public persecution" of his films and of him personally, and went on to declare that the arguments used actually had nothing to do with him. Instead, he claims, "the fight is over nothing other than the struggles between the different factions who seeks power."

Such cynicism about the regime's motives for persecuting writers and artists is very common in contemporary Iran. Middle East Watch makes many recommendations to encourage free and diverse expression of ideas there. Three key ones are (1) to open up state-owned radio and TV to non-government spokesmen, (2) to permit new independent radio and TV stations and (3) to allow the establishment and circulation of independent newspaper and political magazines. Unfortunately, these suggestions do not look likely to be taken up — Middle East International.

Anthony Hyman

BOOK REVIEWS

Shedding light on the Shiites

A Lebanon Defied: Musa Al Sadr And The Shi'a Community

By Majed Halawi
Westview Press, Oxford, England 1993

Shiite "radicalism" became a hot topic in the early 1980s, when an assortment of Islamic groups, most notably Hezbollah, embarked on a string of spectacular suicide bombings and the taking of Western hostages in Lebanon. The movement — for want of a better word — attracted various labels, from "Islamic fundamentalism" to "terrorism" and acquired a kind of glamourous notoriety, but it was never very clearly defined.

Majed Halawi's book is, therefore, most timely in that it clarifies the formative events of Shiite history in Lebanon, as this severely disadvantaged community struggled to gain a political voice in the country's complex confessional system. Beginning with the early split in Islam after the death of the Prophet Mohammad, Halawi goes on to explain the nature of the Shiite ideology of opposition to temporal political rule.

His objective is to chart the career of Iranian-born cleric Musa Sadr, who was responsible for rounding the "slumbering Shiites" of Lebanon and galvanising them into action. Imam Sadr's revolutionary Harakat Al-Mahrumin (Movement of the Disinherited) restored to the marginalised Shiite communities of southern Lebanon the Beqaa Valley and the sprawling slums of South Beirut sense of dignity and determination.

When verbal persuasion failed, Sadr encouraged the Shiites to take up arms, and so the Amal militia came into being. Halawi's story comes to an abrupt end, however, in 1978, when Sadr mysteriously disappeared during a visit to Libya. As for Amal,

whatever the purity of its intentions, the movement rapidly degenerated into just another armed group. Its prolonged siege of the Palestinian refugee camps in the latter part of the 1980s was unparalleled even by the barbaric standards of the Lebanese civil war.

The reasons for Amal's move to greater violence are complex. While it may be understandable that a powerless group, unable to claim its fair share of the political pie, decides upon more militant tactics as the only feasible way forward, it can also be argued that these were ultimately counter-productive. They merely replaced the quest for a more just social order with glorification of violence for its own sake. Had Sadr not disappeared, of course, Amal may have followed a very different course.

A number of conflicting opinions have been voiced about Musa Sadr. Some consider that he "betrayed the very ideals which formed the symbolic and rhetorical core of the movement he initiated." The majority of Shiites in South Lebanon, on the other hand, regard him with respect and affection. As far as they are concerned, he did more than anyone to improve their oppressed status and set them on the road to greater participation in the Lebanese political system. But the imam's greatest legacy, as Halawi suggests, "may be the hospitals, orphanages, schools and vocational institutes established under his initiative." This book succeeds in shedding light on a hitherto murky area. In these days of sensationalising an amorphous "Islamic threat," it is both refreshing and fascinating to discover more about the stories behind the headlines. Halawi approaches the topic from two distinct perspectives: from the lofty vantage point of American political science, but also from his own reality as a Lebanese Shiite. "As the war in Lebanon progressed and America's encounter with terror intensified," he states, "I confronted the consolidation of a Manichean vision of us, the West, the altruistic and freedom-loving, versus them, the sinister, zealous and bloodthirsty. "It is, in many ways, a personal odyssey and the academic jargon occasionally sounds a little forced. On the whole, however, it is a competent piece of writing — Middle East International.

Maria Holt

Kenneth

Of cars and chips

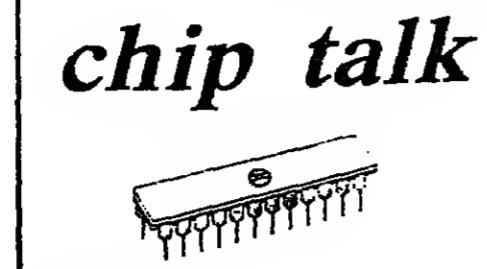
By Jean-Claude Elias

range how history repeats itself. Some of us still remember, several years ago, the dramatic recall to a factory by a giant American car manufacturer of thousands of vehicles sold, after having discovered a fault in the braking system. Even more recently, a similar unfortunate happened to a Japanese car maker, though for a smaller batch of machines.

Listening, a few days ago, to the news that Intel is admitting a defect in some of their latest Pentium microprocessor models, brought back memories of the above stories. Intel is the world's most important designer, manufacturer and supplier of the heart and brain of Personal Computers (PC). The microprocessor chip, from the 80286, now out of production, to the virtually obsolete 80386, and to the popular and fast 80486 chip, Intel is literally driving the world of PCs. Their latest brainchild, the 80586 or Pentium as it is called, released one year ago, has taken the power of the machines to new heights, once again.

It is therefore no surprise that the announcement has shocked those who have already jumped on the bandwagon and purchased a Pentium, or those who are planning to do so. The news is rather reassuring. As with the car example, it confirms the clear and strong commitment of trustworthy manufacturers to their clients. While in the case of a faulty car braking system, the consumer has all the rights to worry, this for understandable personal security reasons, the case of the Pentium is in no way as dramatic.

The problem with some Pentiums — not all of the models — was a fault in the Floating Point Unit (FPU) operation. Simply put, the FPU is the part of the chip that handles advanced mathematical calculations. The fault would cause the computer to freeze — stop from working. Even those who do not use complex mathematics would suffer for there are several types of programmes and applications that use the FPU, without the user's apparent intervention. Games for instance and drawing software cannot work without FPU.



Intel has decided to replace all the faulty chips, estimated at 2 million units, at their expense, including assisting the user in doing the replacement. One can easily imagine the expenditure involved in the operation. For Intel however the stakes are higher than a few million dollars. Although the world leader — by far — of PC microprocessors, Intel cannot ignore Cyrix and AMD, who have been trying to steal a slice of the pie. The two chip manufacturers have had some success in marketing their own versions of Intel-compatible CPUs (Central Processing Unit — another name for the microprocessor) and mathematical co-processors. To maintain their superiority on the market Intel needs the users' absolute trust.

The truth is that Intel and their users badly need each other. The first for obvious business reasons, the second to run with satisfactory speed all the new, power-hungry software that keeps pouring in from Microsoft and others. For the past 15 years or so, both software and chips manufacturers have played with their users a game that doesn't seem to displease any of them. The first know that their products may have some weaknesses and let users discover and report them. The users accept the situation, as long as it leads to improved, faster products, and as long as the frequency and importance of those weaknesses remains within reasonably acceptable boundaries.

Santa Claus with plenty of new Pentium chips in his boot is certainly the dream of all the millions of PC users worldwide.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By Mohammad A. Shuaib

CURIOS SUPERSTITIONS

If he comes across a hunchback in the morning will have a good omen. If he touches his round rump, he will be much luckier.

A housewife who drops one of the utensils in the kitchen while arranging the cupboard may indicate the arrival of an unexpected visitor.

If it happens that she criss-crosses a knife with a fork outside a plate this will bring about misery. In case she isn't left-handed, it won't be much better to stir a drink in a cup using her left hand because this augurs that she may lose seven years from her life.

A man who fastens a lion's skin belt round his waist is said to give courage to its wearer if he lacks it. He who eats the lion's flesh will recover from quartan fever (a disease that catches a patient for one day, leaves him two days and then comes back on the fourth day).

If a lion's eye is placed under one's armpit inside a small sock made of the lion's skin, one can get rid of animal fears.

It had been observed that some lionesses in Africa fell in love with men!

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

- Don't lose your temper. La tanfa'el.
- Don't make a mess of it. La to'akid al-omoor.
- Don't give your mind to what he says. La to'irho ihtimaman.
- Don't monopolise the conversation. La taftakir al-hadith.
- Don't interrupt me. La toqati'oni.
- Don't be narrow-minded. La takon day'ekal-aql.
- Don't get on my nerves. La tothir a'saabi.
- Don't call him bad names. La tasobbohu.
- Don't nurse hatred for anybody. La todmir so'an le'ahad.
- Don't set them at odds. La tothir al-shiqaq baynahom.
- Don't overstep the mark. La tatsjawaaz hoodoodak.
- Don't care a pin. La takarib.
- Don't argue with me. La tojaadilu.
- Don't rely on him. La ta'tamid alay'h.
- Don't run him down. La tahot min qadrilu.
- Don't fish in troubled water. La tastad fil-maa'il akir.

INVITATION TO LAUGHTER

HUMOROUS LETTERS

Dear Madam,

Please do not beat my little son Richard. He is a very delicate boy. We never beat him at home except in self-defence.

Yours faithfully,
Mrs. Milton.

★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Mum.

French is my favourite subject and I hate it.
Your loving son,
Tom.

★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Uncle.

Our school is very good. They ask us to take bath ONCE in a month.

John.

★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dad.

Our maths teacher seems to be crazy. Yesterday

COOKING IS FUN OVEN BAKED FISH

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 egg
- 1 T. water
- ¾ tsp. Tabasco pepper sauce
- ½ lbs. fish fillets (fresh or thawed frozen), cod, haddock perch, etc.
- 1 T. melted butter or salad oil.
- Lemon, parsley and paprika.
- salt and pepper to taste.

METHOD: Combine egg, water, Tabasco sauce, salt and pepper. Beat until well-blended.

Clean fish and dip in egg mixture. Coat generously with corn flake crumbs. Place on foil-lined baking sheet, and drizzle with melted butter or oil. Sprinkle parsley and paprika over top of fish. Bake in oven for 20-30 minutes, or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Serve with lemon.

PUZZLES

ANAGRAMMATICS

Solve the following three clues and from the answers arrange the letters into a twelve-letter word meaning: BAD CONDUCT. one letter has been placed to help you.



Flightless bird (3) Team (4) Nobleman's land (5).

Love bytes as life goes on

By Sameer Ghaleb Bagaeen

The advantages of the system of communication via computers through the Internet are heralded daily. But I've not yet heard anyone comment on the improvement I suspect they will bring to the works, literature and social interaction, the rebirth of the love letter.

A teenage romance of the new millennium can read something like this. Hesitantly, her heart beating wildly with anticipation, she approached the modem. Entering her password with trembling fingers, she hoped against hope the green light would be flashing. It was. E-Mail Waiting. Frenziedly she called up the message. The jumble of codes, numbers and destinations sent a strange tingling through her. He had written, at last. And she was not about to let him slip through the Net.

Love letters have been the dying art form of the more recent years. But we now have the opportunity to watch how the internet of tomorrow will bring them back. At first sight, perhaps, the future seems unlikely bedfellows. The hot flush of heightened romanticism, in a setting of regimented programmes and a cursor ever eager to delete, an exaggerated and brief. But emotions have one inescapable and unsung advantage. They give their undreamed-of tenderness.

Imagination could fire the series of letters in particular, the language of the heart. In an age when lovers did not usually speak each other the time, love together with a dash of imagination, telephone. It was distance which had strengthened the intimacy. In the same way,

some effect. With the telephone we moved away from written communication; and now with E-Mail we are back to where we have to be articulated and thoughtful about how we send these messages.

It will not just be the Internet that electronic mail will make people more thoughtful and articulate than it will not just be in communication across continents and countries, but even within the same building. Office workers with computer networks and simple message-sending systems have already discovered that messages sent from terminal to terminal are endowed with a lyricism and poetry, often literally, that the sender would never aspire to in a face-to-face meeting.

Faced with a blank screen and the chance to compose, the writer can emulate a number of diverse styles. More often, it's the school-studied texts of restrained courtship or swelling passion that are imitated rather than the streetwise, witty style of contemporary writers. These are vocabularies that would sound at best pretentious, at worst idiotically lovable if voiced in the corridor or canteen, but somehow acceptable, even welcomed, on a screen on a wet afternoon.

The only sad aspect about the computer's likely revival of the love letter — and it is a tragic irony — is that none of the love letters of the new millennium will survive. A touch of the keyboard and the most passionate expressions of commitment vanish for ever.

These words are dedicated to those amongst us who are in love, with the warmest of wishes for a happy and prosperous 1995.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, Dec. 29

7:30 N.B.A.

8:30 Road To Aviation

Sara and Aunt Olivia team up while trying to return the lost gold to its rightful owner.

9:10 The Hot Squad

Phoenix Rising

(The Hot Squad are modern-day Untouchables who more than just a tightly knit family, also comprise special crimes police and charged with apprehending the most wanted of criminals).

The brothers fight to protect their father when vengeful explosives expert escapes from prison and seeks to even the score with him.

10:30 News In English

10:30 Feature Film — Good Morning Vietnam

Starring: Robert Wolders

Imported by the army for an early AM radio show Croaker, an irreverent, non-conformist doc jazz blasts the air-waves with a constant barrage of rapid-fire humour, and the hottest hits from back home.

11:30 Exile

Friday, Dec. 30

7:30 African Skies

The Hunted

Tom, Sam's younger brother, comes to hide out at the Freedom Ranch after he is the victim of an attempted assassination while in Vienna.

5:00 Hollywood Stuntmakers

8:30 You Bet Your Life

9:00 P.M. Magazine

9:30 Heart Of Courage

An attempt to save a political bureau in Italy fails to catch a hijacker in Canada.

10:00 10:30 In English

10:30 Blanche

Upon graduation from the convent, Blanche has to choose between Napoleon's love and her burning passion for the medical profession.

11:10 Never The Twain

Saturday, Dec. 31

7:30 Harry And The Hendersons

8:00 Innovation

8:30 Quantum Leap

9:10 Murder She Wrote

10:00 News In English

10:30 Feature Film — Cocktail

Starring: Tom Cruise & Elisabeth Shue

While in search of quick fame and fortune working as a fast-talking and quick-pouring bartender in a sketchy New York club, Brian's life gets complicated when he meets the beautiful young artist Jordan Mooney.

11:55 Countdown To The New Year

12:00 A Rock Concert — Foreigner

1:00 A Concert From The Vatican

Sunday, Jan. 1

7:30 Celestial

8:15 The Album Show

9:00 The Hidden Room

After her husband's death, Klara is on the verge of falling in love when suddenly an apparition appears to change the entire course of her life.

9:30 Heartbeat

A local programme which deals with medical subjects pertaining to Jordan.

10:00 News In English

10:30 Feature Film — Miles From Home

Starring: Richard Gere & Kevin Anderson

Faced with a bitter reality and a dying dream, Frank and Terry, the two Roberts brothers, take to the road and become modern-day outlaws.

12:00 The Upper Hand

Tom frustrates his mother's expectations in him as he is engaged in arranging a date with a new girlfriend.

Monday, Jan. 2

7:30 Black Beauty

8:00 Street Hawk

9:10 Shades Of L.A.

10:00 News In English

10:30 Flight Into Hell

Two pilots get lost in a deserted coastal area where they make forced landing after their plane runs out of fuel.

11:00 Intermission (Jazz music)

Tuesday, Jan. 3

7:30 Practical Guide to the Universe

8:00 The Detectives

8:30 Quantum Leap

9:10 The Deep Probe

10:00 News In English

10:30 First Circle

Investigations continue in search of the traitors while a attempt is made to liquidate the scientists responsible for running the design of the new voice invention.

11:10 The Piglet Files

The M-15 agents are watching a house for the arrival of an East German agent. Sadly, they seem to have got it wrong and only Peter Chapman can save the day.

Wednesday, Jan. 4

7:30 Home Improvement

Tin gets himself in a lot of trouble after he makes a programme that criticises housewives.

8:00 Life In The Freezer

The programme views the Antarctic in mid-winter. Ghost-like white fish are kept alive by anti-freeze in their blood and giant sea-scorpions patrol the sea bed.

8:30 Quantum Leap

9:10 Law And Order

10:00 News In English

10:30 Snowy River

Matt along with his son Robbie works tirelessly to put an end to a drought which has lately hit their territory.

11:10 Coming Of Age



Kenneth Branagh takes longest leap with new Frankenstein

By Bob Thomas
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kenneth Branagh always has possessed a young man's confidence in challenging popular beliefs — he proved it when he directed and starred in the film *Henry V* at age 28.

Laurence Olivier was 37 when he directed and starred in a lavish film version of *Henry V* in 1944. It became an instant classic, considered the best Shakespeare ever filmed. Most filmmakers dared not attempt the play again.

Undaunted, Branagh, who had appeared in two movies and directed none, undertook *Henry V*, portraying royalty and commoners alike as a scruffy, unwashed replica of what they probably had been.

The results were critical buzzups and Academy Award nominations for Best Actor and Best Picture of 1988. Shakespeare's tragedy is a hard enough sell in the film marketplace: with the exception of *The Taming Of The Shrew*, his comedies have been totally neglected. Yet, last year, Branagh made an all-star version of *Much Ado About Nothing* that charmed critics and did acceptable box office.

Branagh has directed two modern films: *Dead Again*, a film-noir murder story, and *Peter's Friends*, a kind of British *The Big Chill* about a reunion of university graduates. Neither was well received by critics or the public.

However, the Northern Irish Branagh faced his biggest challenge with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Although remade with variations ad infinitum, the 1931 version directed by James Whale with Colin Clive as Frankenstein and Boris Karloff as the monster remains in every film buff's mind.

Branagh reviewed the earlier films and was not deterred.

"I was familiar with the James Whale versions (he also directed *The Bride Of Frankenstein*), which are the ones I know best of all. The (British-made) Hammer Films I was quite familiar with as well, and I didn't enjoy them very much," he said in an interview.

"One of the things that's happened to the genre, I suppose, is that after the Whale films, the whole genre has been thought about as B-picture, especially the Hammer ones. I reminded myself about all these films to think about where we should go. There

would be no point if our film should look like the others and sound like the others."

"I checked out all the films, including my favorite, Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein*. It's the summation of every parodic response to the story itself and to the brilliant ways it has been made in the past. Having seen that, I knew what we could do."

The Karloff makeup, with its platform shoes, high dome and bolt through the neck, has long been copied and parodied. Branagh aimed to avoid comparisons with his mentor, Robert De Niro.

"We wanted to have a patchwork man, someone put together with bits from other people, which is what happened in the book," Branagh said. "We talked to surgeons and other advisers about what sort of stitches would have been done then under the pressure of time that Dr. Frankenstein would have faced."

"We wanted him to be somebody who was in pain, as though he was covered with sores and cuts that even as you watched him you knew where the sore.

"We also faced the problem that anybody in

the story does: To make sure (the makeup) was vivid, but within it the actor could be seen and could convey his performance in a way that would touch us, so it wouldn't be too much of a mask."

Branagh, who will be 34 on Dec. 10, published his autobiography, *Becoming*, at age 28. He is serious about his work, but he is also affable, his boyish Irish face often widening in a smile.

He and his Oscar-winning wife, Emma Thompson (*Howards End*), met in 1986 when both were cast in a BBC mini-series, *Fortunes Of War*. She has said: "I didn't know his work, but I did know he was sort of a young lion in the British theatre. It was sort of keen interest at first sight."

Interest turned to romance, and three years later they were married. Even though they have worked closely, no signs of friction have appeared. Both seem to lack the ego of such high-powered performers.

Branagh's actors wore him, says Helena Bonham Carter, who portrays his lover and wife in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: "He has plenty of humour, and for actors he

is ideal because he knows how delicate our confidence is. So he's incredibly tactful."

Branagh

was born in Belfast. His family moved to England when he was 9. As a boy he became enamored with American movies. His all-time favorite was *The Great Escape* about allied prisoners escaping from a German PoW camp, which had an all-star cast led by the late Steve McQueen.

"I can do scenes from it... Donald Pleasance and James Garner stealing the airplane... Charles Bronson in the boat with James Coburn... a touching story that really engaged you," said Branagh.

His passion for drama

brought him to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, where he dazzled everyone and walked off with the highest prize, the Bancroft Gold Medal. He immediately was cast in Julian Mitchell's play, *Another Country*, then joined the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC). His Henry V at 23 drew critical raves.

Branagh

surprised the

theatrical community by

leaving the RSC to form

his own Renaissance

Theatre Group. His pro-

ductions were electric,

similar to Orson Welles'

to Welles, who had filmed

his masterpiece *Citizen Kane* at 25. But Branagh

seems to exhibit more sta-

bility. And with a bit of

Irish luck, he may have a longer, more productive career.



Kenneth Branagh (left) plays the lead in *Henry V* with Brian Blessed as Exeter

Mercury Theatre in New York in the late 1980s.

With his film, *Henry V*, viewers made allusions

to Welles, who had filmed

his masterpiece *Citizen Kane* at 25. But Branagh

seems to exhibit more sta-

bility. And with a bit of Irish luck, he may have a longer, more productive career.

Louis Armstrong feted in a general resurgence

By Samuel Fromartz
Reuter

NEW YORK — Hello Dolly, Satchmo's back in town.

Louis Armstrong died in 1971 but the gravel-voiced king of the jazz trumpet is being heard more now than any time since his death.

New issues of long-lost vintage Armstrong recordings were released on CD in time for Christmas shoppers. In early December, a week-long celebration of his music was held at New York's Lincoln Centre featuring the trumpet player some call Armstrong's proudest heir — Wynton Marsalis.

"He makes me feel good about being alive

and about living in the world," Marsalis said in a recent interview.

"He's got a majestic sound, a big full round tone, and he communicates a personality of warmth and grandeur. It just makes you feel good," Marsalis said.

Marsalis, artistic director of jazz at Lincoln Centre, has come under fire for his traditionalist stance toward the music, but even critics don't fault him for a week-long programme on the father of jazz.

Record companies, meanwhile, have been combing their vaults lately and re-issuing Armstrong's hits, starting in the '90s and lasting until

What A Wonderful World — which made the charts 18 after his death after being used in the film *Good Morning, Vietnam*.

Columbia recently issued *Portrait Of An Artist As A Young Man*, 1923-1934, which presents Armstrong's seminal work that first brought him fame. For years, many of the recordings were only available to collectors of old 78 records.

Another set, *Highlights From His Decca Years*, issued by Decca, features Armstrong pieces from 1924 to 1958. Its scope is larger — spanning much of a remarkable career — but it is less complete than the Columbia set.

Or as bebop trumpeter,

Dizzy Gillespie once said when asked about Armstrong's impact: "No him,

sive than the Columbia

set.

The Queens

exhibit

traces Armstrong's birth

into poverty in 1901 in

New Orleans through his

early musical experiences

in the Waifs Home For

Boys, and Storyville, the

famed red-light district.

By the time he travelled to Chicago in 1921, following his mentor, King Oliver, he was on his way to a place in history. In 1923 he made his first recording, and by 1924 was playing to crowds in New York with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra.

Armstrong's groups, the hot five and hot seven, from 1925 to 1927, had a revolutionary impact on

jazz.

"With solos such as these, he created a vocabulary of phrases that would echo into music for decades," Morgenstern writes.

"Hundreds upon hundreds of musicians, not only in America but wherever records were sold, studied these solos note by note — to memorize if not actually to play, for the technical demands, not to mention the rhythmic and harmonic ones, were well beyond the capacity of most musicians of the day."

As the poet Langston Hughes once said: "There is something about Louis Armstrong's horn that creates spontaneous friendships."

The supermodel comes of age

By Marie-Dominique Follain
Agence France Presse

PARIS — Feted with increasing frequency on newspaper front pages, supermodels are venturing forth from the catwalks and have come of age as a multi-media phenomenon.

Their images nurtured by the press and their egos massaged by agents, they have replaced actresses and princesses as the idols of the popular imagination — and exploited their celebrity by branching out into music, literature, television and the gossip columns.

For the bottom line is:

Despite being panned by the critics it has sold well! — including 43,000 copies shifted in France in a single month. She also cut an album which has to date, however, failed to capture the popular imagination.

In October Campbell, a Jamaican-born Briton, published her first novel *Sweat*, predictably enough a fast-written tale of a young model's rocky path to fame and fortune.

She chose Monaco as her home because she feels "secure" in the principality's streets, she added. And no, she had no intention of revealing when she and Copperfield planned to tie the knot.

Others of their ilk, including Cindy Crawford and Elle MacPherson, have been given their own television shows. They also plug workout cassettes — a marketing ploy given the patina of credibility by Jane Fonda — or earn millions of dollars for lending their faces to perfume producers.

Schiffer and Crawford, for instance, are under contract to Revlon.

Crawford's pulling power was illustrated at the start of December, when the announcement that she and her sex-symbol Buddhist husband Richard Gere were separating after three years of

clothing as makes no difference.

In fact, the supermodels' image has become so all-encompassing that their original function — leading fashion parades — has been superseded.

No one takes pictures of Chanel models any more — they photograph Schiffer in Chanel.

And the fashion houses that can afford celebrity rates can also guarantee that, whatever the press may think, their collection will be a bestseller if it's been worn by a star name.

It's all far cry from the profession's first low-key starlets of the post-war era such as Bettina and Capucine.

British models Twiggy

— famed for the androgynous look — and the va-va-voom-like Jean Shrimpton, enjoyed minor celebrity status in the 1960s, as Chanel's top performer Ines de la Fressange did 20 years later.

Nowadays much of the mystique has disappeared.

The "oldest" stars hire

advisors to prepare them

and the world for a new

career in their mid-30s,

while pretenders as young

as 14 and 15 chomp at the bit to outdo and eventually replace their elder.

Witness emerald-eyed

Brandi, the 16-year-old

phenomenon making

media waves with her rolling

catwalk gait that seems

virtually to defy the laws

of gravity.



Supermodel Claudia Schiffer poses with her 1995 calendar in New York

Naomi Campbell walks the catwalk at the Louvre in Paris

Frogs, toads and flies may yield new drugs

By Ben Hirschler
Reuter

LONDON — Scientists are studying a bizarre menagerie of creatures including frogs, toads, snakes, flies, leeches and sharks in the search for new medicines.

Chemicals found in their bodies may help treat a range of human ailments, including high blood pressure, difficult to cure infections and even cancer, they believe.

The idea of tapping nature for pharmaceuticals is not new. A quarter of western prescription drugs

are based on plant-derived substances and five of the world's top 30 drugs come from fungi.

But now the "bio-prospecting" net is being cast wider.

According to speakers at a "drugs from nature" conference here, the potential of the animal kingdom is huge.

Amphibians alone produce an "awe-inspiring" number and diversity of compounds in glands on their skin, said Dr. Barry Clarke of London's Natural History Museum.

He believes chemicals from frogs and toads may

have particular value in treating skin and respiratory infections.

Special interest is centred on how certain creatures with only a rudimentary immune system manage to survive in a hostile environment teeming with pathogenic bacteria and fungi.

The key appears to be the production of a series of complex molecules called peptides which provide potent defence systems against potentially lethal microbes.

Peptides isolated from the African clawed toad, called magainins, are

already being tested in the United States by major pharmaceuticals.

Results of an early clinical trial on impetigo, a childhood skin infection, proved disappointing, but the concept of using peptides is attracting considerable interest from drug researchers and companies.

Scientists at Tokyo University are working on a peptide called sapecin found in the blood-like substance, haemolymph, in fly larvae. Sapecin appears to be a powerful antibiotic which protects

young maggots from the billions of bacteria which swarm in their natural habitat — rotten meat.

The Tokyo researchers are now working with this chemical to produce a simpler version, small enough to pass through the human digestive system without being destroyed by gastric juices. The prize could be a new tablet capable of fighting the growing number of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Sharks, too, may have an in-built anti-microbial system, this time based on a novel steroid compound called squalamine which

appears to protect them from infection.

In some disease areas, animal-based drugs have already arrived.

Antitoxins, a new class of heart drugs, were originally derived from the venom of the Brazilian pit viper. Drug designers have refined the original product and synthesised a version which could be given by mouth.

The first such oral antitoxin, marketed by Bristol-Myers Squibb as capoten, has been on the market since 1981, and last year it clocked up global sales of \$1.8 billion.

Other venoms may also prove of medicinal value.

Professor Eugene Grishin of the Russian Academy of Sciences believes, since they affect a host of cellular systems. And the chemical venom pool is immense, with 20 different toxins isolated from just one species of scorpion.

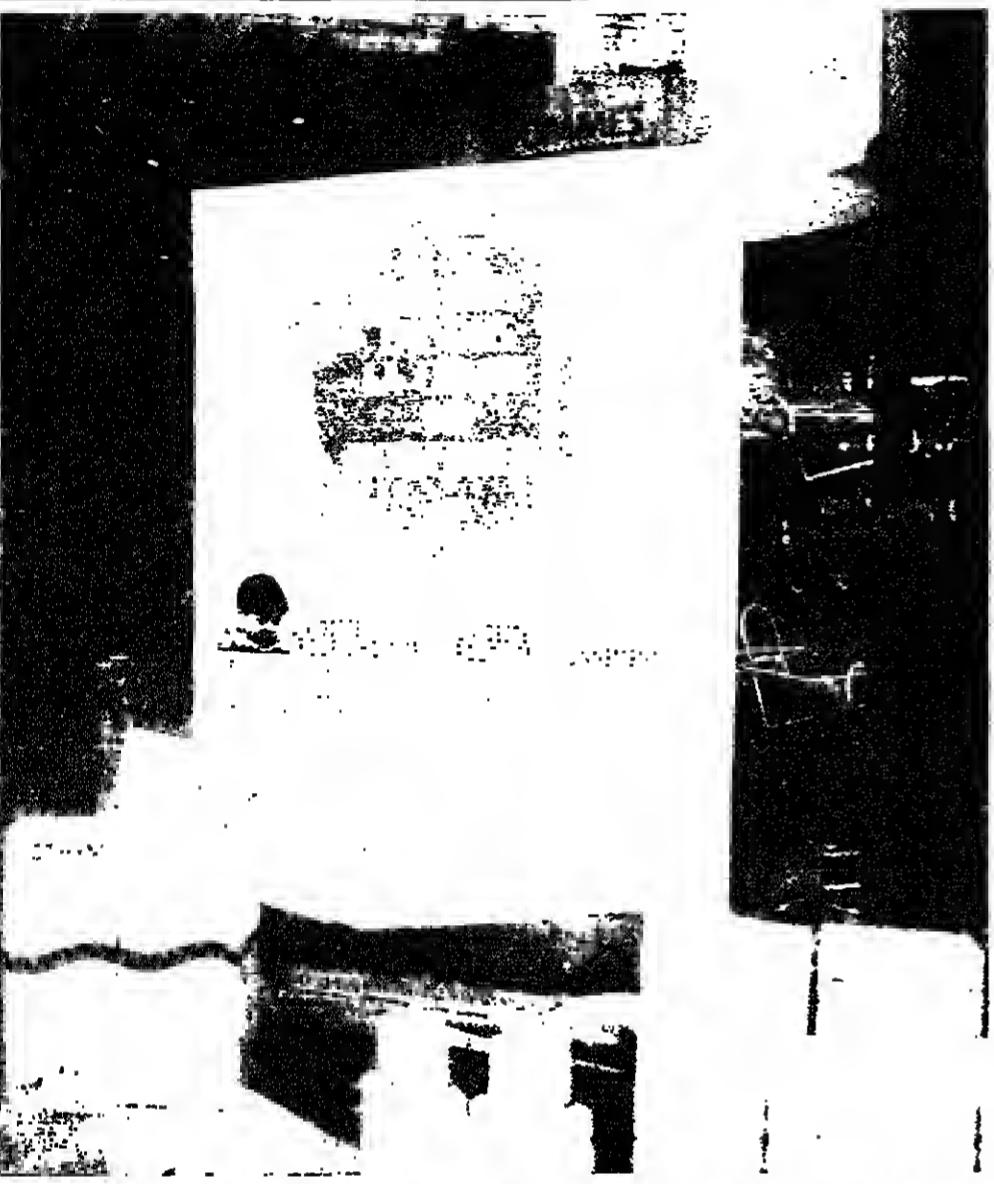
One creature with a long history of medical use which may be about to make a comeback is the leech.

Used for centuries for blood-letting and the removal of "diseased blood", the leech contains a variety of chemicals in

its saliva which stop blood from clotting.

Ciba-Geigy has now developed a genetically-engineered version of one of these compounds, hirudin, which pharmaceutical analysts expect to reach the market in 1996.

Dr. Robert Wallis of Biopharm UK — the world's only commercial leech farm — believes hirudin is only one of several substances in leech saliva which could play an important role in controlling acute coronary syndromes and thrombosis in future.



To preserve the environment Cycamed recycles unused medicines and help poor countries Cycamed takes care of the rest.

Recycling unused medicines

By Florence Raynal

Protecting the environment, helping poor countries and avoiding accidents in the home are the three aims of a simple gesture, that of systematically taking one's unused medicines back to the chemist's. Cyclamed takes care of the rest.

PARIS — "Together, let us form the medicine chain. Let us recover your packaging and unused medicines. Some people lack your unused medicines. And nature does not need them. Return them to your chemist." The message of the Cyclamed association, created under the auspices of the National Order of Pharmacists, are clear, direct and easily understood. The green bags, handed out to customers in dispensaries, come back full. The mobilisation of the profession is widespread. This is revealed by the results of the survey carried out in the Limousin which is the first region in France to have set up this new system of collecting unused medicines, in November 1993.

Backed by the further success obtained in the Loire region, Cyclamed extended the operation

and now, every two months, a new region adopts the system. After Brittany and Aquitaine, it is now the turn of the Ile-de-France region, around Paris, and the North, and the government, supporting the action which is to be maintained, fully intends to have the system extended to the whole of France by the end of the year.

2 birds with 1 stone
The process is simple, at least judging by appearances. There is the message broadcast by the means of publicity used by Cyclamed (posters and stickers) and then there are the measures taken by the chemist who hands out recyclable bags to his customers and urges households to have the reflex of bringing back their unused medicines and the packaging, but nothing else. Objects which cut or prick as

well as soiled dressings are not accepted.

In the dispensary, the items are roughly sorted out. The packaging and out-of-date medicines are put on one side and items which can be used for humanitarian purposes, on the other. The former, left in their green bags, are put into a big cardboard box with "to be destroyed" written on it in red letters. When it is full, it is collected by the wholesaler and distributor on his round and placed in a packed skip located at the distribution agency. Its contents are then recovered by professionals who will see that they are incinerated in a plant which respects the standards in force, which, with the environmental and public health constraints, is, at present, the most appropriate means of eliminating such products.

In addition to protecting the environment by saving medicines, which are usually put in the dustbin, from being dumped, and participating in aid for poor countries, the system has the advantage of improving public health as it limits the numerous accidents in the home by poisoning from medicines.

An obligation made law

The system originated for two main reasons. First of all, it was noted that, of the 18 million tonnes of annual household waste in France (which is about a kilo per person per day), some 60,000 tonnes come from medicines, 95 per cent of which is simply the containers: glass (phials and bottles), paper and cardboard (leaflets and packaging), plastic (blister-packs from pills and capsules, and tubes), and aluminium (tubes from ointments, aerosols, etc.). The second reason is pressure from new environment laws. Indeed, a decree, in force since January 1993, forces industrialists to

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

TA-DAH!

By Harvey Chew

ACROSS
1. Asteroid's land
5. Metal basket
9. Swift
12. Fly over
13. Doubtless —
15. — Krishna
16. Abstain
21. Asteroid's orbit
22. Plant Mart pre
23. Of high excellence
24. Hippo
26. Flight
27. Pneumocystis type
28. Influenza virus
31. — (helps out)
32. Weed
34. Summer
35. Pays
37. Down
38. Aphrodite's son
39. Engrossed
40. Mammal
41. Pottery fragment
42. Opening for anchor cable
43. — (not right)
44. Drove
45. In the sack
46. Local vestment
47. Playful and vivacious
48. Canadian Indian
49. Womankind
50. — (not right)
51. — (not right)
52. Bridge bid
53. Geographical act
54. Theory in economics
55. Out of the world
56. — (not right)
57. Colorant
58. Wanderer
59. — Sign
60. City on the Ohio
61. — (not right)
62. Game show host
63. Work, e.g.
64. Prepared
65. Sawed seal
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Publishers thrive on royal saga

By Allen Nachman
Agence France Presse

LONDON — In 1994, Prince Charles admitted cheating on his wife, his wife was said to have cheated on him, and his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, decided to drill for oil in the garden.

Also in 1994, leaked documents showed hundreds of royal staff and courtiers living the good life, rent-free, in royal palaces, raising a public furor and prompting calls for a leaner, Scandinavian-style monarchy.

As an aside, the queen's estranged daughter-in-law, Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, announced she had twice tested for AIDS, and days later a Texas woman who said she was dying of AIDS alleged she and Ferguson once had the same lover, "business advisor" John Bryan.

All in all, it was not the best of years for Britain's royal family coming after the "annus horribilis," which was how Elizabeth II characterised 1992, the year the gentle and insulated 69-year-old monarch seemed to discover the real world.

In that year, like a nightmarish real-time soap opera, the marriages of three of her four children fell apart — two sons separated and a daughter divorced — all gashly chronicled by a cannibalistic tabloid press hungry for royal flesh.

This year, news of the royal marriage-go-round was more orderly, with the juiciest morsels dished up not ambush-style by the tabloids but in three best-selling books and a national television interview with Prince Charles.

Last June, in an unprecedented one-on-one with journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, Prince Charles candidly opened up about his life as heir to the throne of England, his marriage to Diana and their separation.

Once their 10-year marriage was irreconcilably on the rocks, he did stray into adultery, said Prince Charles, validating long-standing rumours of his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles, wife of an army brigadier.

In October, a book entitled "Princess In Love" chronicled an alleged five-year affair between Princess Diana and army Major James Hewitt, her son's riding instructor.

The book, by tabloid journalist Anna Pasternak, was written in the style of a teen romantic novel, dwelling on a candlelight dinner in Kensington Palace that prefaced the first night: "... and she took his hand and led him to her bedroom."

The book was translated into 22 languages and reportedly made a bundle for all concerned.

Princess Diana drew sympathy. Maj. Hewitt, whose grinning face adorned the book jacket, was roundly panned as a "kiss-and-tell rat."

Next came "The Prince of Wales," an "authorised biography" by Dimbleby in which Prince Charles whinges about his miserable childhood in which he was bullied by schoolmates, forsaken by a disinterested mother and disdained by a cold and demanding father who eventually pushed him into a loveless marriage.

Prince Charles' father, the Duke of Edinburgh, granted a newspaper interview to say he had never aired family business in public, and neither had Queen Elizabeth, considered a sound rebuke of his son's candor.

Last on the year's royal publishing bandwagon was "Diana, Her New Life," a sequel by author Andrew Morton to his 1992 book, "Diana, Her True Story," which portrayed the princess as a lonely, desperate woman trapped in a loveless marriage, who had tried suicide.

The new Morton book portrays an entirely new Diana, happy and free, thinking about remarrying and having more kids but not — yet — about divorce, which would raise major legal complications having to do with her future as queen.

The current queen was meanwhile suffering criticism for allowing wildcatters to drill on the grounds of Windsor Castle, said to sit on 100 million barrels of oil.

By Velisarios Kattoulas
Reuter

TOKYO — Could it happen in Japan?

Listen to Nozomi Sato (not her real name), who likes nothing better than a marijuana joint to soothe her nerves after a hard day's work in the heart of Japanese industry.

"I don't drink, don't steal, and don't create trouble, so what's wrong with smoking joints?" she asks.

Police, drug counsellors and a journalist who interviewed scores of drug users and dealers this month for a major magazine, are hearing her question more and more and shuddering at what may lie ahead.

"When I was at Kyoto University 10 years ago there were just two types of Japanese using drugs: artist types and yakuza (gangsters)," said Hiromichi Uyaga, whose article on Japanese drug use has set off a debate about whether this country is headed down a familiar road.

"Now it seems like everybody from high-school and university students to typical salarymen ('white collar workers') and housewives are doing drugs," said Mr. Uyaga, who returned home in July after two years at New York's Columbia University. "It's now as easy to buy drugs in Tokyo as it is in New York," he said.

Shigemi Hirano, deputy director of the National Police Agency's (NPA) drug enforcement division, said many Japanese were getting "a taste for drugs" in America, Europe and South East Asia and then continuing to use them back in Japan.

Some social workers believe the problem is homogenous as Japanese turn to drugs to escape the cradle-to-grave demand for hard work and discipline.

In response to the demand, and in a search for new income to overcome Japan's recession, mobsters are increasingly turning to drug smuggling and dealing. Mr. Hirano said.

Police believe that as the European and American drug markets become more difficult because of crackdowns, Latin American and Chinese gangs are targeting Japan.

Japan heading down a familiar drug road



"It's now as easy to buy drugs in Tokyo as it is in New York" (File photo)

Drug dealers with portable phones now hang around in many big Tokyo parks. They usually ask customers to stash money in one place while they stash drugs elsewhere.

Police admit drug use is rising, but insist it is not yet a big problem.

In World War II Japanese authorities gave "speed" to arms factory workers, to "make them work more" and there has always been speculation that drugs were given to the "kamikaze" suicide pilots to lessen

their fear of going to die.

Like drug seizures, drug-related arrests are also small by international standards.

In 1993 less than 20,000 people were arrested, 15,252 for speed, 1,953 for cannabis and 312 for cocaine and heroin.

But Father Roy Asenheimer, co-founder in 1985 of the Drug Addiction Rehabilitation Centre (DARC), said that the number of users is probably much higher, and likely to rise further.

"You have to remember that denial is a very important part of Japanese society," said Father Roy, referring to the police's reluctance to admit widespread drug use.

Speaking at a Tokyo coffee shop he visits every day, he pointed to two men across the room.

"If you asked them, they could get drugs for you," he said.

Father Roy has witnessed a lot of suffering since he co-founded Japan's first drug

rehabilitation centre, which now has 30 branches nationwide treating some 500 patients a day.

"A lot of young people take hash and LSD, but they get there from being hooked on something else first," he said.

So far, rising drug use has brought little of the violent drug crime that many American and European cities suffer.

That may be changing.

This year there has been an unprecedented wave of yaku-

Leave Earth before it's too late, Carl Sagan warns

By Jane Arraf
Reuter

NEW YORK — When Carl Sagan was a child, he looked up at the stars and wondered what was out there. Now the celebrity astronomer looks back at the view of Earth from outer space and wonders whether there will be anything left there.

Mr. Sagan's latest book, "Pale Blue Dot," examines the planet we live on, a tiny speck of dust in a vast universe, and warns that we must reach out and colonise other worlds before it's too late.

According to Mr. Sagan, there is now a consensus among scientists that the odds of a major asteroid slamming into Earth are alarmingly high — much higher than being killed in an airline crash or winning a lottery jackpot.

"The probability that the Earth will be hit by a civilisation-threatening small

world in the next century is a little less than one in a thousand," Mr. Sagan told Reuters in a recent interview.

"The probability of dying on a random commercial airline flight is one in two million."

The impact, which Mr. Sagan likens to the catastrophe 65 million years ago which many scientists believe wiped out the dinosaurs and much of other living things on Earth, would send up a thick pall of particles, darkening and then cooling the Earth — wiping out the agricultural base that feeds the Earth's more than five billion people.

The U.S. House of Representatives Science Committee has proposed requiring the U.S. space agency NASA to map by the year 2005 all Earth-approaching comets and asteroids but the bill has not been passed.

"We live amidst a swarm of comets and asteroids and sooner or later a group of them is going to hit us," said Mr. Sagan. "If we wish to

prevent that disaster we are going to have to be in space," he said.

That would mean increased space exploration, manned and robotic — not an easy feat in an era of cost-cutting and a climate in which NASA receives less than five per cent of the funding of U.S. defence spending.

But while space exploration, still in its infancy, has found no signs of life in this solar system, many scientists believe that beyond our tiny corner of the galaxy, the vast universe must be brimming with life.

"... for all our conceits about being the centre of the universe we live in a routine planet of a humdrum star stuck away in an obscure corner... on an unexceptional galaxy which is one of about 100 billion galaxies," Mr. Sagan said, summing up one of the messages of "Pale Blue Dot."

"That is the fundamental fact of the universe we in-

habit and it is very good for us to understand," he said.

Although manned space exploration has stalled in the 25 years since the United States — in what Mr. Sagan describes as a cold war power play — sent men to the moon, some are still reaching out and listening.

For a NASA programme to listen for radio waves in space for signs of intelligent life, private donors have come up with \$7 million to revive the project, which will hit the intergalactic air from Australia next year.

Somewhere in space, the two Voyager spacecraft in their journey through the milky way, are carrying golden phonograph records with greetings in 59 human languages and one whale language and Earth sounds ranging from a pygmy girl's initiation song to Chuck Berry's rock tune "Johnny b goode".

Mr. Sagan, whose books and television programmes

have explained the mysteries of the universe to millions of people around the world, says "we must explore other worlds for our own survival."

We have lost touch with the heavens since our ancestors first followed the stars and named the days of the week after the planets. We have learned about the solar system and rocketed him to international stardom.

"There's a huge hunger that people all over the world have to understand science," Mr. Sagan said, explaining what he said was the astounding success of "cosmos" — the public television series which reached half a billion people in 60 countries and rocketed him to international stardom.

"We arrange a society built on science and technology and make sure that almost no one understands science and technology — that's the clearest prescription for disaster imaginable," he said.

Mr. Sagan, whose books and television programmes

have kept up a steady pace of writing, lobbying and projects in his life-long mission.

The Pulitzer prize-winning author, scientist, lecturer and author who helped

robotic missions for NASA is currently finishing a book with his wife Ann Druyan about the English language.

In his latest book, subtitled

"A Vision of the Human Future in Space", Mr. Sagan runs through what we have learned about the solar system and what we have yet to learn.

The book also answers the plaintive question in the Bob Dylan song "Blowin' in the wind" — how many years can a mountain exist before it is washed to the sea? (about 10 million years).

Since almost dying in a boched appendectomy several years ago, Mr. Sagan

is working on a series of multimedia discs aimed at children.

How to reconcile our position with our position in a vast universe?

"We should listen precisely for reasons," said Mr. Sagan.

"All God promised Noah is that he would be flooding — there are guarantees."

The Warner Bros. movie about extraterrestrial life will be released in 1995 featuring Jodie Foster. Mr. and Ms. Druyan are working on a series of

science books and CD multimedia discs aimed at children.

How to reconcile our position with our position in a vast universe?

"We should listen precisely for reasons," said Mr. Sagan.

"All God promised Noah is that he would be flooding — there are guarantees."

(AP Photo)

No Israeli nomination yet

(Continued from page 12)

attitude towards implementation of the agreements between the two countries.

Mr. Bentur said The Jerusalem Post that Majali had been quoting criticism of the peace process levelled by opposition members of the Jordanian parliament.

"On the contrary," he continued, "we had the impression that King Hussein and the government are coping very well with the criticism. They expressed the hope that various processes would be speeded up but in absolutely no way did they express any complaints."

Bentur said the meeting had been held to discuss Israel's role in projects of

international cooperation.

Mr. Bentur said Israel had offered Jordan to provide expertise in the areas of agriculture and housing.

Moshe Hananel, director of Galilee Tours, responded yesterday to reports of criticism from Jordan by saying that Israeli tourism had provided a shot in the arm to the Jordanian tourism industry.

Majali had been quoted as saying that Israeli tourists came for only one day and bought food with them, but Hananel said Israelis who bring their own food do so for reasons of Kashrut.

"The Muslim elements in Jordan understand the problems of Kashrut," Hananel

said, referring to the fact that Muslims have similar restrictions.

He said that, since the peace treaty was signed, about 13,000 Israelis have visited Jordan, 7,500 with his company. Most, he said, had stayed in four- and five-star hotels.

He said Jordan benefitted from visa fees and entry fees to Petra, and that hotels, bus companies, and souvenir shops have also benefited, especially during the present slack season.

However, Ziv Spector, director of Tzel Midbar, a desert tour company which wants to set up a desert tour centre with a Jordanian company, said the influx of Israeli tourists has resulted in problems for the Jordanians.

Muscat visit that "there are openings in various parts of the Arab World."

He praised the "courage and imagination" of Oman's Sultan Qaboos and said the trip to Muscat would serve as an "encouragement of the continuation of the peace process."

Mr. Rabin said after his

visit to Oman, the official Qatar News Agency (ONA) said on Tuesday.

It also quoted Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassim Ben Jabr Al Thani as saying Qatar was studying the possibility of setting up an Israeli interests office in Doha.

Qatar: No Rabin visit

Qatar has not agreed to host a visit by Mr. Rabin after his groundbreaking visit

to the Gulf Arab state of Oman, the official Qatar News Agency (ONA) said on Tuesday.

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Qatar: No Rabin visit

Qatar has not agreed to host a visit by Mr. Rabin after his groundbreaking visit

without permission.

Orient House said in a statement that the law "will not change the status of Palestinians in Jerusalem nor the Arab character of the city, which will forever stay the capital of the State of Palestine."

The PLO said meanwhile it would ignore a new Israeli law banning it from conducting political activities in Jerusalem.

Tourism Minister Uzi Baran said yesterday it is too early to judge the effects of peace on tourism between the two countries, Israel Radio reported.

Parliament passed a law on Monday preventing the PLO from having a mission in Arab East Jerusalem or from holding public meetings there

**Business
daily
Beat**

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

DEF: Jobless rate is 28%

★ ★ Development and Employment Fund (DEF) Director-General Ali Jaddou said that a field survey has shown unemployment was standing at 28 per cent. The survey showed the highest jobless rate to be in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid. Percentages of people looking for jobs are 38 per cent in Amman, 30 per cent in Irbid, 16 per cent in Zarqa, seven per cent in Balqa, four per cent in Karak, two per cent in Mafrat and one per cent in Tafleeh. Mr. Jaddou said the DEF budget for 1995 amounted to JD 10 million, of which JD 2.5 million to be provided by the government and the rest by the European Union and the German Bank for Reconstruction. The DEF chief pointed out that although the fund was set up to help the most needy, 60-70 per cent of those who received loans were not so deprived to qualify for the loan. Still, DEF financed 894 projects for individuals this year for a total of JD 3.6 million and helped provide 1,300 job opportunities. DEF has spent JD 8 million and provided 4,600 work opportunities since it was set up in 1992. The fund aims to finance 1,500 projects and provide 3,000 job opportunities next year (Al Aswaq).

★ ★ Trading in shares of the Jordan Industrial Resources Company and the Jordan Investment and Finance Bank was stopped temporarily pending a decision by the minister of industry and trade on a price of new shares to be privately subscribed in order to raise the capital of the companies (Al Aswaq).

★ ★ The Amman Chamber of Commerce is requesting all institutions and companies to fill a special form it has designed to collect up-to-date information about the commercial sector. The form will be distributed upon payment of membership fees for 1995 (Al Ra'i).

★ ★ A five-star hotel will be built close to Al Waha circle which is now an intersection with traffic lights at the end of the Gardens Street (Wasfi Al Tel Street). The hotel is to be part of an investment in a huge complex (Al Aswaq).

★ ★ The Housing and Urban Development Corporation will start implementing more than 17 projects, estimated to cost JD 89 million, at the onset of the new year. The projects, which include expansions at some housing estates in Sahab, Ajloun, Jarash, Ramtha and Aqaba, also cover projects at Abu Neir, Salihiyeh Al Abed, Al Zawarreh, Marka, Tareq, Al Jizeh, Irbid, Umm Qais, Karak, Ma'an and Maqrat (Al Ra'i).

★ ★ The General Budget Department is putting the final touches on the budgets of 20 financially and administratively independent government institutions. The budgets of these 20 entities, amounting to no less than JD 550 million, will be forwarded in early January to the Lower House of Parliament for review and discussions. It is the first time that budgets of independent government institutions are submitted to the Lower House and its Financial Committee for debate in response to a request by the House (Al Ra'i).

★ ★ The chairman of the Israeli chamber of commerce is expected to visit the Kingdom in early January. The Israeli official will reportedly meet Jordanian officials at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, chamber of commerce and the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce (Al Dustour).

★ ★ The cost of preparing the agricultural policy, the first draft of which was completed by the Ministry of Agriculture, is estimated at \$750,000, to be covered by U.S. financing (Al Dustour).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET HOUSING BANK CENTER - ABOVE SINGAPORE TELEPHONE: 660170 / 663170 ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 28/12/1994						
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUATION TRADED	PERCENT CHANGE	CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	DATE
ARAB BANK	1220	222540	+1.2%	182.250	181.500	
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	469956	260720	-0.1%	4.350	4.340	
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	105720	1.570	-0.2%	1.570	1.580	
THE HOUSING BANK	114075	342133	-0.1%	2.980	2.900	
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	69550	397027	-0.1%	5.650	5.700	
JORDAN GULF BANK	136	5456	-0.1%	2.990	2.950	
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	500	1846	-0.1%	3.550	3.700	
JOHN LEWIS BANK	28263	104565	-0.1%	3.700	2.700	
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	26700	133500	-0.1%	5.000	5.000	
BUSINESS BANK	250	6970	-0.1%	3.500	2.620	
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	250	87490	-0.1%	3.080	3.120	
BETT ELMAH SAVING & INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	31500	47162	-0.1%	1.510	1.490	
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	52000	88392	-0.1%	1.700	1.700	
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK						
S A N K E S S E C T O R	517412	1946421	INDEX NUMBER: 157.78	CHANGE: -0.10%		
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	1350	3252	-0.1%	2.550	2.480	
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	110	210	-0.1%	2.600	2.600	
JORDAN ELECTRICITY	1200	5930	-0.1%	4.000	5.000	
I N S U R A N C E S E C T O R	3600	11998	INDEX NUMBER: 138.21	CHANGE: -0.15%		
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER /NEW	4705	7156	-0.1%	1.520	1.520	
JORDAN PETROLEUM /NEW	5350	7962	-0.1%	1.490	1.490	
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	454	3013	-0.1%	6.500	6.500	
JORDAN ELECTRICITY	100	97	-0.1%	9.90	9.70	
JORDAN IRON MINES	415	2180	-0.1%	4.800	4.800	
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	100	480	-0.1%	3.150	3.140	
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	1050	3100	-0.1%	2.390	2.420	
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	4400	10532	-0.1%	1.350	1.350	
JORDAN GREEN STATE INVESTMENT	1000	6013	-0.1%	2.260	2.200	
JORDAN INVESTMENT & TRADE CENTER	500	951	-0.1%	1.030	1.020	
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODITY HOTELS	14500	118873	-0.1%	3.500	3.490	
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	18850	722	-0.1%	1.420	1.450	
JORDANIANS EXPIATRIATES INVESTMENT HOLDING	500					
S E R V I C E S S E C T O R	96667	216593	INDEX NUMBER: 131.39	CHANGE: +0.57%		
ATTARAKH CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	650	832	-0.1%	1.240	1.280	
TER JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	668587	198606	-0.1%	2.870	2.890	
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	14794	44554	-0.1%	2.940	2.980	
THE ARAB POTASIE /NEW	750	4238	-0.1%	5.500	5.700	
THE INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1244	11611	-0.1%	9.300	9.340	
THE JORDANIAN CO. FOR KITES	500	2283	-0.1%	4.800	4.520	
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	16266	64490	-0.1%	5.120	5.200	
ARAB CHEMICAL DETERGENTS INDUSTRIES	952	15523	-0.1%	16.000	16.600	
SPINNING & WEAVING	400	1080	-0.1%	2.700	2.700	
RAPHA INDUSTRIES	2500	9703	-0.1%	3.730	2.720	
ARAB AL DAMA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1000	1520	-0.1%	16.000	16.000	
ARAB ELECTRICAL & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	17750	17725	-0.1%	2.970	2.020	
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY	21050	145648	-0.1%	6.850	6.850	
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	38726	35413	-0.1%	9.20	9.20	
GENERAL INVESTMENT	6000	19500	-0.1%	3.250	3.250	
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1850	2533	-0.1%	1.370	1.360	
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	250	708	-0.1%	2.830	2.830	
JORDAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	20000	107800	-0.1%	5.350	5.300	
ARABIC INDUSTRIES & MATCH/TIMCO	6500	9800	-0.1%	1.520	1.520	
NATIONAL CARBON & WIRE MANUFACTURING	12550	67290	-0.1%	5.300	5.300	
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	2000	3925	-0.1%	1.970	1.960	
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3400	9410	-0.1%	2.780	2.790	
KATHNER INVESTMENT	500	875	-0.1%	1.750	1.750	
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	8800	37430	-0.1%	4.190	4.210	
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	250	640	-0.1%	2.670	2.560	
I N D U S T R I A L S E C T O R	266302	890245	INDEX NUMBER: 128.13	CHANGE: +0.50%		
G R A N D T O T A L	883981	3085256	INDEX NUMBER: 143.60	CHANGE: +0.08%		
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET		212359				
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET		2668912				

Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation helps small businesses get credits

By Suleiman Al-Khalidi
Reuter

AMMAN — A Jordanian company, backed by the central bank as its major shareholder, has begun providing novel backing for small business credit traditionally shunned by private banks, officials said Wednesday.

The company's aim is to encourage commercial banks to extend credit facilities to small and medium-sized businesses," Jamal Salah, general manager of Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation.

"The banks have traditionally been interested in large customers who were less risky and more profitable." He said they shied from lending to entrepreneurs and small business who lacked traditional real estate collateral.

The company's strategy was to help banks to provide venture capital for entrepreneurs in productive sectors, especially women to increase their participation in the workforce.

It has finalised loan guarantee accords with 17 private banks setting individual quarterly-adjusted

ment bodies, 17 private banks, the chambers of commerce and industry and two insurance companies.

The company superceded a \$5 million U.S. Agency for International Development grant project to Jordan to support small entrepreneurs.

Mr. Salah said Jordan's banks have traditionally been interested in large customers who were less risky and more profitable."

Officials statistics show that 90 per cent of Jordan's total industrial firms are small to medium sized. There are over 16,000 such firms.

Bankers say the company had strong government backing as part of efforts to increase economic growth and cut an official 14 per cent unemployment rate in a peace era with Israel.

The company default guarantees cover 75 per cent of loans under 20,000 dinars (\$28,450) and 50 of its upper

loans ceilings.

The company charges 1.5 per cent fees from the loans it guarantees to cover default provisions.

Additional income comes from investments.

Mr. Salah said banks currently tend to give two-year loans and the company's loans extended to a maximum of six years, usually with a year's grace period.

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The company default guarantees cover 75 per cent of loans under 20,000 dinars (\$28,450) and 50 of its upper

ceilings of 40,000 dinars (\$56,900) loans.

Mr. Salah said the company did not give 100 per cent loans to ensure banks, by taking part of the risk, study the feasibility of small business projects before granting loans.

Official figures estimate the cost of creating one small business job at 2,500 dinars (\$3,560) compared to 6,500 dinars (\$8,250) for medium-sized firms and 30,000 (\$42,670) for large-scale industry.

SABIC '94 profits likely up to \$800m

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's industrial giant, Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), is likely to make a profit of three billion riyals (\$800 million) in 1994, its chairman has said.

Abdul Aziz Al Zamel, who is also electricity and industry minister, told a board of directors meeting in Riyadh that SABIC's production capacity in 1994 rose to 20 million tonnes a year from 17 million in 1993.

K.J. leads Suns to final-second victory

DALLAS (R) — The veteran Phoenix Suns taught the young Mavericks a lesson in finishing when they erased a five-point deficit in the last 52 seconds a 15-foot jumper from the corner with 3.7 seconds left for the game-winner.

"We've been running that play all night long," Kevin Johnson said of the pick and roll that set up his shot. "I got a good look at the basket. I just had to make the right decision whether to shoot the jumper or get the ball inside to Charles (Barkley). I got a good look at it and it just went in."

Jimmy Jackson missed a jumper at the buzzer for Dallas.

That wasn't the shot Dallas coach Dick Motta would have preferred. "You want to go to the hole and put it in the hands of the referee or make them play defence," said Motta.

Johnson led Phoenix with 28 points and 11 assists. Barkley added 22 points and 15 rebounds for the Suns, who have won seven of eight since Johnson's return from the injured list.

Jackson scored 31 points and Jamal Mashburn had 30 for Dallas, which shot a season-high 57 per cent from the field.

Rookie Jason Kidd had 16 assists but hit just two for 10 from the field for the Mavs.

He has dropped four in a row.

In Houston, Hakeem Olajuwon had 35 points, 16 rebounds, and eight assists to lead the Rockets to a 105-93 triumph over the Atlanta Hawks, spoiling Lenny Wilkens' bid to tie red Auerbach's record for most career NBA coaching victories.

Wilkens entered the game with 937 victories over his



Orlando Magic centre Shaquille O'Neal #32 stumbles after he was fouled by Milwaukee Bucks #22 forward Johnny Newman (AP photo)

22-year coaching career, one short of the 938 posted by Auerbach. The Hawks next play San Antonio Thursday.

Ken Norman had 28 points and 11 rebounds to pace Atlanta.

In Chicago, the Magic used an 18-2 fourth-quarter burst to remain unbeaten at home with a 103-83 win over the Miami Heat.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 21

points, grabbed 11 rebounds and blocked four shots, and Anfernee Hardaway added 19 points for the Magic, who improved their NBA-best record to 22-5.

At New Jersey, John Starks scored five of his 22 points during a 14-0 third-quarter run and Charles Smith added 20 as the New York Knicks snapped a five-game losing streak that longest in four years, with a 99-91 win over the Nets.

Starks hit four 3-pointers. Patrick Ewing had 16 points and Derek Harper added 14. The Knicks were without forward Charles Oakley, who had toe surgery earlier in the day.

Chris Mullin scored 21 points for New Jersey, which was playing its fifth straight game without leading scorer and rebounder Derrick Coleman (hand injury).

At Detroit, Vin Baker scored 24 points as the Milwaukee Bucks snapped a 10-game road losing streak with a 98-88 wire-to-wire victory over the Pistons.

Terry Mills had 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Pistons, who lost for the fourth straight time at home.

In Antonio, David Robinson scored 30 points, Chuck Person had 21 and Vinny Del Negro 20 to help the Spurs win their seventh straight, 119-108 over the Charlotte Hornets.

The Spurs are 6-0 since Dennis Rodman returned from his suspension for conduct detrimental to the team.

The Hornets played the entire second half without starting centre Alonzo Mourning, who twisted an ankle. Larry Johnson had 29 points and 12 rebounds for Charlotte.

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In Sacramento, Spud Webb's fadeaway jumper with two seconds remaining lifted the Kings to a 102-101 triumph over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Mitch Richmond had 30 points and Olden Polynice scored 21 for the Kings.

At Golden State, Tom Gugliotta and Tim Hardaway had 20 points each to lead seven Warriors in double figures in a 129-105 rout of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Hardaway had 15 assists for the Warriors, who led all the way and have won two straight after a 10-game losing streak.

Cedric Ceballos led the Lakers with 24 points.

In Denver, Rick Smits scored a season-high 33 points and grabbed 14 rebounds to lead the Indiana Pacers to a 95-91 win over the Nuggets.

Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf had 23 points to lead Denver.

Debut blunder hands Forest victory

LONDON (AP) — Norwich goalkeeper Andy Marshall made one mistake in an otherwise faultless debut performance when his poor positioning allowed Norwegian Lars Bohinen to score from a corner to give Nottingham Forest a 1-0 victory at the City Ground Tuesday.

Marshall was pressed into action in the opening minutes of a game that Forest dominated throughout after Bryan Gunn was stretched off with a dislocated ankle.

Apart from that one fatal error five minutes after the break when he was left flapping in no-man's land as Bohinen's corner swung in at the back post, the young keeper kept his side in the game with a string of excellent saves, including one to keep out a free-kick swerving free-kick from Stuart Pearce.

While fourth-placed Forest can travel to West Ham Saturday confident of a third victory in four games, Norwich will have to show far greater enterprise if they are to avoid a third consecutive defeat when they entertain Newcastle.

Earlier in the day Tottenham Hotspur took their unbeaten run to seven games with a 3-0 victory over London rivals Crystal Palace but gave their fans little to cheer in a largely dreary encounter that yielded only a handful of goal opportunities.

Palace, without a league goal for almost two months, bunted their way to their second 0-0 draw in 24 hours and earned a point that could prove vital in their fight for Premiership survival.

It was a frustrating afternoon for Tottenham, who were unable to build on Monday's 2-0 win at Norwich, but it was another game which highlighted their defensive improvement under manager Gerry Francis.

Sixty have now kept clean sheets in three successive games — a feat they



Liverpool's Robbie Fowler stretches full length to shoot whilst Leicester City goalie Kevin Poole dives to save the shot (AFP photo)



Manchester United's Nicky Butt collides with Chelsea's Andy Myers (left) (AFP photo)

RESULTS

Milwaukee	98	Detroit	88
New York	99	New Jersey	91
Orlando	103	Miami	83
LA Clippers	95	Chicago	92
Phoenix	119	Dallas	118
Houston	105	Atlanta	93
San Antonio	119	Charlotte	108
Indiana	95	Denver	91
Golden State	129	LA Lakers	105
Sacramento	102	Portland	101

son scored 21 points as the Los Angeles Clippers scored a 95-92 victory over the Bulls.

The Clippers held the Bulls to one field goal in the final

5:42, snapping a five-game

losing streak and winning at

Chicago for the first time

since January 1979 — 17

games and nearly 16 years.

Toni Kukoc scored 21

points and Scottie Pippen

added 19 for the Bulls. Pip-

pen was ejected late in the

second quarter for arguing

with referee Terry Dutcher.

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New York Giants' David Meggett (left) escapes a tackle attempt from Philadelphia Eagles' Bill Romanowski in their NFL game. Giants won 16-13.

The year began and ended with Dallas

NEW YORK (AP) — The year began just like 1993, with the Dallas Cowboys beating the Buffalo Bills handily in the Super Bowl, a 31-13 victory that marked Buffalo's record fourth straight loss in the championship game of the American National Football League.

It ended with Dallas in position to become the first team ever to win three straight Super Bowls. But they were in shaky position, for this was the season of the San Francisco 49ers, who were really the only team that took advantage of the new salary cap instead of moaning about it.

In fact, the cap led to total parity except for those two teams at the top, San Francisco, which finished the regular season 13-3 and Dallas, which finished 12-4, losing two of its last three and entering the playoffs with Emmitt Smith nursing a sore hamstring.

Everyone else. For the first time ever, four teams from one division, the NFC Central, made the playoffs — Minnesota, Green Bay, Detroit and Chicago, but the Vikings won at 10-6 and the others were 9-7, a typical record in year in which mediocrity prevailed.

And the Bears and Packers edged another 9-7 team, New York Giants, in a

breakers.

In the AFC, Pittsburgh, at 12-4, had the best record, but went into the playoffs with a less-than-formidable offense quarterbacked by Neil O'Donnell and Buffalo, the four-time Super Bowl loser, missed the playoffs and finished 7-9.

The surprises? New England, which finished 10-6 in Bill Parcells' second year, winning its final seven games and Cleveland, at 11-5. The other playoff teams were AFC East champion Miami (10-6) and San Diego (11-5) in the West with Kansas City (9-7) sneaking in as a wildcard with Joe Montana ahead of the Los Angeles Raiders (9-7) the AFC preseasont favourite.

But San Francisco was dominant. Even as teams were being forced to cut veterans — the most prominent being Phil Simms of the Giants — the 49ers were signing them, often giving them minimum salaries; then adding on incentives that would be counted against future caps.

Still, the Niners had to overcome the injury-caused loss of four of the five starting offense linemen early in the season. They lost in Kansas City in their first meeting.

Joe Montana on the other side of the hall, then were humbled 40-8 in a game in which coach George

Seifert lifted Steve Young in the middle of a series.

That was the turning point.

Young exploded at Seifert and the 49ers never lost again as Young had his best season and finally got on track with Jerry Rice. Sanders, who signed for \$1 million after the American Major League Baseball season was officially ended by a players strike, brought a new dimension to the defense, bringing three interceptions back for touchdowns and allowing Merlin Hanks to switch from cornerback to safety, where Hanks had a Pro Bowl season.

The Niners won their next 10, averaging 36 points a game in the process, before to Minnesota in a finale that was meaningless to them.

Their 21-14 victory over Dallas at Candlestick on Nov. 13 — Hanks had three interceptions — gave them the tiebreaker for home field in the playoffs, and they just about clinched it when the Cowboys lost at home to Cleveland 19-14 on Dec. 10.

On a league-wide basis, rule changes and adaptations designed to increase scoring worked, although it might have been at the expense of the officiating — three seemed to be a record number of disputed calls this season.

Rice set an NFL record for touchdowns in a career in the first week of the season when

he scored three times, to bring his total to 127 in 10 seasons, one ahead of Jim Brown. Rice finished with 15 TDs for the year, giving him 120. While Young played long enough against Minnesota to complete 12 of 13, breaking Joe Montana's NFL record for quarterback rating.

Offences worked for other receivers, too.

Minnesota's Cris Carter finished with 122 receptions, 10 more than the old mark of 112 by Sterling Sharpe, and Rice had 112 catches, the best of his brilliant career. Terance Mathis of Atlanta, New York jets discard, caught 111, 18 more than he had in all of his four seasons in New York.

It also was a year in which the drought of young quarterbacks seemed to be abating.

While Young, Dan Marino, Joe Montana, John Elway and the rest of the over-30 gang continued to play well, some younger stars began to emerge, led by New England's Drew Bledsoe, in his second season and Green Bay's Brett Favre, in his fourth, Favre's 33 TD passes were second in the league to Young. ANF he threw just 14 round.

Behind them were the likes of Craig Erickson of Tampa and Dave Brown of the Giants, who showed signs of turning into first-rate quarterbacks.

But 108-kg champion Timur Taimazov still felt the need for his own coach and sponsor in wrestler-turned businessman Viktor Ardishev.

The Ukrainian team,

much weaker than last year's world championship squad, have found a wealthy sponsor in former super-heavyweight Anatoly Pisarenko, who set up business in the United States at the end of his sporting career.

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Jordan yet to receive Israeli nomination of ambassador

Bentsur rejects reports of Jordan voicing disappointment over Israeli attitude

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian government has not received any official nomination of an Israeli ambassador to Jordan and Amman believes that the Israeli government has not reached a final decision on the issue, official sources said Wednesday.

The sources, requesting anonymity, were commenting on an Israeli newspaper report that Jordan had made its "displeasure" known to Israel over the planned appointment of Ephraim Halevy, deputy head of the Mossad secret service, as Israeli ambassador to the Kingdom.

"How could the government make a comment on a nomination which has not been received?" said one source. "Jordan would make its views known as and when it receives an official nomination through the proper channels."

Following the peace treaty signed on Oct. 26, Jordan and Israel opened embassies in Tel Aviv and Amman respectively on Dec. 11. Both missions are headed at charge d'affaires level and operate out of hotels pending suitable alternate premises.

Jordan has named Marwan Muasher, former spokesman of the peace negotiating team with Israel, as its ambassador to the Jewish state. But Dr. Muasher is not expected to assume the post until Israel

completes its process of naming an ambassador and securing Jordanian approval of the nomination.

Several names, including those of outgoing Chief of Staff Ehud Barak and foreign ministry official Yossi Gal, have been floating in the Israeli press as possible nominees to take up the first Israeli ambassadorship to Amman on Sunday.

Haaretz said Dr. Majali told Mr. Bentsur that Jordanians were complaining that they were not seeing the fruits of peace. As an example, Dr. Majali was reported to have told Mr. Bentsur that many firms that expected increased business with Israelis coming to Jordan since the peace treaty were seeing the visitors spending little, if any at all, money in Jordan.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was reported to be supporting Mr. Halevy for the post while Foreign Minister Shimon Peres backed career diplomat Gal, who, for some time, served as Dr. Muasher's counterpart during the peace negotiations.

The Jerusalem Post reports: Reports of Jordanian government disaffection with the consequences of the peace treaty with Israel are "inaccurate," Mr. Bentsur said Tuesday.

Several newspapers reported that during the meeting between Bentsur and Jordanian Prime Minister Majali, Dr. Majali had said Jordan was "extremely disappointed" with the Israeli

(Continued on page 7)

Beirut bombing suspect said to be Israeli agent

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese authorities named the main suspect in last week's car-bomb which killed three people in Beirut and said he worked for the Israeli intelligence service Mossad, state-run television said on Wednesday.

Tel Lihan, quoting an army statement, said Ahmad Hallaq was the main suspect in the Dec. 21 blast in the Beirut bastion of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) group, which is fighting Israeli troops in South Lebanon.

The statement said Mr. Hallaq, recruited in July 1993 by a Mossad officer named Dan "who is active in Cyprus," had set off by remote control the car-bomb which killed two Hezbollah members and a civilian and wounded 11 people.

One of the dead, Fuad Moughniyeh, was the brother of Lebanon's most wanted hostage-taker of the 1980s, Imad Moughniyeh.

Lebanese officials and Hezbollah accused Israel of being behind the blast.

Lebanon's interior minister said earlier on Wednesday that Lebanon authorities had arrested several people suspected of involvement in the bombing.

The main leads into the

Israel to return last antiquities to Egypt

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel said on Wednesday it was handing back to Egypt some 600 cartons full of antiquities, the last of the finds it promised to return from Israel's 15-year occupation of the Sinai peninsula.

The investigation is progressing quickly and its results will be revealed in the coming few days," Mr. Murr added.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said the answer to who was behind the car-bomb rested not with him but in Lebanon.

Judicial sources confirmed a report by the Beirut daily Al Safir on Wednesday that among those arrested in connection with the bombing was the wife of the ring leader and that he works for Mossad.

"Yes, the newspaper report is accurate. The main suspect works for Mossad and he remains at large but his wife has been arrested," one source told Reuters.

Al Safir, quoting "well-informed official sources," said some ring members had planned the Beirut bombing at a meeting with a top Mossad officer in Cyprus.

"The suspects' confessions... revealed that Mossad was involved 100 per cent (in the bombing) from the beginning to the end," the paper reported.

Syria insists on reciprocal arrangements with Israel

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Damascus insisted Wednesday that Israeli-Syrian security arrangements should be balanced after an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, rejecting the Jewish state's latest security demands.

"It is necessary to arrange for reciprocal and balanced security measures on both sides of the Golan line after a total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and South Lebanon," the government newspaper Tishrin said.

The Syrian-Israeli talks are stalled over the scope and timing of an Israeli withdrawal from the strategic Golan Heights, seized in the 1967 Middle East war, and over the type of peaceful relations to be established.

Syria also says it will not sign a peace deal unless Israel withdraws from its self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

"Israeli security demands are completely rejected. Syria cannot be dragged into discussing security fears which Israel is using as a pretext to cover up expansionist aims," Tishrin said.

Syria Sunday announced its rejection of an Israeli demand to keep observation

troop withdrawal.

Israeli and Syrian military officials held talks in Washington Thursday and Friday to pave the way for a resumption of formal negotiations suspended since the Feb. 25 Hebron mosque massacre.

Tishrin said that "in the age of missiles, sophisticated weapons and advanced planes, security and geographical hindrances have no value."

"Peace would be worthless if the Golan were not returned to its homeland, if its children did not go back home, if the Israeli settlement were not dismantled and the settlers did not leave the Golan."

Nearly 14,000 Israelis live in 32 settlements on the Golan, which was "annexed" in 1981.

"Syria fights with honour who war is imposed, and makes peace with honour when it is offered a just and comprehensive peace," Tishrin said.

According to Yossi Olmert, a researcher at Israel's Hebrew University who said he had contacted Syrian experts, Israel has concluded that "it will not reach peace with Syria without a scientific cooperation



PALESTINIAN PROTEST: A Palestinian woman shows her resignation as an Israeli worker walks away with up-rooted olive trees planted Monday on a hillside south of Bethlehem on the West Bank, where villagers from El Khader and Israel Peace Now activists tried to prevent Israeli settlers from starting construction to enlarge the

Jewish settlement of Ephrata. Palestinians say that the land belongs to them for generations, while settlers insist that the land is owned by the Israeli state. Five people were injured and 45 arrested on Tuesday as security forces dispersed hundreds of protesters from starting construction to enlarge the

Pope condemns Algeria killings, calls for dialogue

VATICAN CITY (Agencies)

— Pope John Paul condemned the killing of four Roman Catholic priests in Algeria as an act of barbarity on Wednesday and called for dialogue between the military-backed government and Islamic fundamentalists.

"I pray to God that the sacrifice of the four priests will be a seed of reconciliation and peace and will induce everyone to opt for dialogue and mutual understanding, without which there is no future for a truly human society," the Pope said.

He told pilgrims at his weekly general audience that "the barbaric assassination" of the clerics, three Frenchmen and a Belgian, had brought sadness to Christians.

He said he was close to the small Catholic community in Algeria, which he called a "martyred country."

The four priests, members of the order of the White Fathers, were shot dead on Tuesday in their residence in Tizi-Ouzou, 110 kilometres east of the capital Algiers.

The official Algerian news agency APS has blamed Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas for the killings, carried out less than 24 hours after French commandos killed four Algerian guerrillas who

had hijacked an Air France airliner.

The latest deaths brought to eight the number of priests and nuns among the 70 foreigners killed in Algeria since the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) ordered 45 foreigners more than year ago to leave the country or face death.

Algeria has been in turmoil since the government called off a 1991 general election which fundamentalists were poised to win. About 20,000 Algerians have since died in the civil strife.

The White Fathers named the French priests as Jean-Marie Chevillard, 65, Alain Deniaudard, 75, and Christian Chesse, 36. The older Decker, said Charles Decker, said 70.

It said they were shot to death by an armed band that broke into the priests' house.

No group has claimed responsibility for the killings. Algerian press reports said the six gunmen who killed the clerics probably intended to kidnap them.

Four of the attackers,

armed with Kalashnikovs and carrying walkie-talkies, dressed up as policemen in order to get into the presbytery in a quiet area of Tizi Ouzou, witnesses cited in the Algerian press said.

The suggestion that the

militants intended to kidnap the priests was backed by reports that two accomplices were waiting outside the mission in a van intended to be used in the abduction, reports said Wednesday.

After locking up the mission's employer and the group of supplicants, the killers burst into the office of Chevillard and ordered him to follow to the police station.

Realising that it was a trap, Chevillard started shouting, was pulled out into a courtyard and shot dead. His three fellow missionaries were shot as they were trying to escape.

The Algerian press meanwhile led its coverage Wednesday with attacks on French criticisms of the Algerian government and doubts over the French handling of the plane hijacking.

The pro-government daily l'Authentique suggested that France might in some way have manipulated the hijacking for its own political purposes.

There were several "shady aspects" to the affair which suggested that the seizure of the aircraft, its flight to France and the final seizure by French forces was not just "a simple hijacking," the paper said.

Security sources said Amal guerrillas fired Katyusha rockets, mortar bombs and machineguns at three SLA posts.

Israeli and SLA artillery and tanks opened up on Braachit, nearby Shaqra village and surrounding hills,

they said. Five houses in Braachit were damaged in the retaliatory shelling.

Israelis rocket Lebanese house

BRAACHIT, Lebanon (R)

— An Israeli helicopter gunship rocketed a house in a South Lebanon village, wounding two young boys, witnesses said on Wednesday.

Villagers told a Reutet reporter that two rockets fired by the helicopter hit the house of a local official of the Shiite Muslim Amal movement in Braachit village north of Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon.

Two unexploded rockets were dismantled by U.N. peacekeepers.

It was the 31st Israeli air raid into Lebanon this year.

Amal said the attack on the official's house took place just before midnight after its fighters attacked Israel's South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia allies on the edge of the zone. No casualties were reported to the attacks.

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The suggestion that the

George Burns cancels birthday appearance

NEW YORK (R) — George Burns, the 90-year-old Oscar-winning comedian, has cancelled his annual appearance at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas but the venue is taking reservations for his 100th birthday gig, an operator said Wednesday. "He's cancelled. But we're taking reservations for 1996," said a Caesar's switchboard operator. "He's scheduled to play here from Jan. 18 through Jan. 22, 1996, though that could be changed. We're taking reservations right now," said the operator. The operator said she had no further information on Burns' condition but a hospital spokesman in Los Angeles said Burns was recovering from surgery.

The comedian was discharged in September from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles after surgery to drain excess fluid from the surface of his brain. The fluid buildup was caused by a head injury suffered when he fell in his bathtub at his Beverly Hills home.

"He hasn't worked for a while. He had surgery several months ago. I imagine they cancelled because he's not yet ready to do it," said Ron Wise, a spokesman for Cedars-Sinai. Burns

has continued to play show dates through his 90s and had also been booked to star at the London Palladium on his 100th birthday in 1996. In his 80s Burns became a film star, won an Oscar, resurrected his fading stage career, became an author and went on to make hit records. He won the 1975 best supporting actor Oscar for his performance as a retired comedian in the film version of Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys* and his career soared. At age 93, he became the oldest-ever Grammy Award nominee, with a nod in the spoken-word category for *Grade -- A Love Story*.

Study: women with AIDS die sooner than men

CHICAGO (R) — Women suffering from AIDS have shorter survival rates than men and are particularly susceptible to pneumonia, a prime killer of infected victims, a study published Tuesday said. The increased risk of AIDS-related pneumonia among women may be due to their having poorer access to health care, lower socioeconomic status and less social support than infected men, the researchers said. The University of Minneapolis study, which followed over a 15-month interval 76 women and 3,779 men from 17 health centres around the United States, found the deadly disease progress at similar rates in men and women from the time of initial infection with the virus. "Compared with men, HIV-infected women in the study were at increased risk of death, but not disease progression," author Sandra Melnick wrote in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study found that women with AIDS were 1.32 times more at risk of dying than men with the disease and 1.38 times more likely to develop bacterial pneumonia. Women with a history of intravenous drug use, for whom shared needles can spread the infection, were at a substantially greater risk than initially infected men of contracting the deadly pneumonia. But infected women were at about the same risk as men in having the disease progress and weaken their immune systems. Women were also found to be much less at risk than men of developing kaposi's sarcoma, a common cancer among AIDS victims.

Lebanon bans New Year shooting

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Lebanese Defence Ministry has suspended all firearms licences during the holiday season and warned revellers against shooting in the air to celebrate the New Year. Defence Minister Mohsen Dalloul's decision, announced on Wednesday, renders licences null and void until 8:00 a.m. on Jan. 1. Only bodyguards of political figures, officials, clerics and diplomats are exempted. The ministry warned it would take severe action against anyone violating the ban. Several people were arrested last year when they defied a similar decision and fired rifle guns during the holidays. Before and during the 1975-1990 civil war, it was common practise across Lebanon for people to fire guns to mark the birth of a child, a wedding, a baptism, or a death. Rocket-propelled grenades were also used.

Palestinian leaders hold talks in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Hardline Palestinian leaders said Tuesday that they had met with senior Iraqi officials to discuss how to torpedo the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy accords. Two leaders from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Abu Ali Mustapha and Abdul Rahim Mallouh, held talks with Iraqi Vice President Taib Yassin Ramadan and Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, Mr. Mustapha told AFP. The talks focused on "ways to make the accords fail" and "ways to unite Palestinians and national Arab forces to foil American and Israeli plots in the region," said Mr. Mustapha, second in command of the Damascus-based PFLP.

Two killed in clashes in Egypt

ASSUIT (R) — Suspected Muslim militants killed one policeman and wounded another when they opened fire on Wednesday. They said the shooting took place on Tuesday and the gunmen, who stole one policeman's rifle, escaped when the train stopped at Farshat station in the southern province of Qena. The dead

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bazargan to seek medical treatment abroad

TEHRAN (AFP) — Former Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan is to travel abroad shortly for medical treatment, his relatives said Wednesday. Mr. Bazargan, 88, has been suffering from heart problems since early Dec. and his physicians have ruled out an operation for him in Iran because of his advanced age. Mr. Bazargan, who heads the opposition Freedom Movement Party (FMP), might visit the United States, the sources said. The FMP, a moderate Islamic movement founded in 1961, is among the few opposition groups tolerated in Iran. Mr. Bazargan headed the first provisional government after the 1979 Islamic revolution, but he was ousted for espousing liberal ideas over the years.

"We are trying to contact other countries to get back artifacts," Mr. Noureddin said. "So far we have not had good reactions from these countries."

Iranian archaeologists uncovered the artefacts, including pottery, fine objects, textiles, shell and ceramic jewellery and hundreds of coins, during the 1967-82 Israeli occupation of Sinai, the desert peninsula linking Africa and Asia which lay on the crossroads of many ancient civilizations.

The Israeli authority officially applied to the Egyptian authorities to lend Israel 24 objects containing Hebrew inscriptions. These include third-century Byzantine ceramic oil lamps with Jewish candleabra — menorah — imprints.

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